THE Hudson REVIEW

WENDELL BERRY:
A Secular Pilgrimage

JOHN D. ROSENBERG:
Varieties of Infernal Experience

A. R. AMMONS:
Essay on Poetics—a long poem

WILLIAM STAFFORD:
At Home on Earth

BETH HARVOR:
Pain Was My Portion—a story

Photographs by PAUL VANDERBILT AND JOEL MEYEROWITZ.

Poems by W. S. MERWIN AND GARY SNYDER.

Articles and Reviews by WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD, PATRICK CRUTTWELL, ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS, JOHN SIMON, JOSEPH BENNETT, VERNON YOUNG.

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NUMBER 3
AUTUMN 1970

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Notes on Contributors

WENDELL BERRY, poet, essayist and novelist, lives in Kentucky and is a frequent contributor to THE HUDSON REVIEW. A group of his new poems will appear in an early issue.

JOHN D. ROSENBERG* is Professor of English and Chairman of the Humanities Staff, Columbia University. He is the author of *The Darkening Glass: A Portrait of Ruskin's Genius* (Columbia University Press) and editor of collections of Ruskin and Swinburne. He is currently completing a book on Tennyson's *Idylls of the King.*

A. R. AMMONS' most recent book of poems is *Uplands,* published this fall by W. W. Norton. Mr. Ammons teaches at Cornell.

GARY SNYDER's* newest collection of poetry is *Regarding Wave* (New Directions).

W. S. MERWIN is the noted poet and translator. A selection of his versions from the Quechua will appear in an early issue of this Review.

DOROTHY ROBERTS has published two collections of poems and several chapbooks. She lives in Pennsylvania.

PAUL VANDERBILT* lives in Middleton, Wisconsin, and works with the State Historical Society in Madison. JOEL MEYEROWITZ* lives in New York City and is presently writing a book about how Americans spend their leisure time. Photographs by Mr. Vanderbilt and Mr. Meyerowitz were exhibited in the American Pavilion at the recent World's Fair in Osaka.

WILLIAM STAFFORD has been appointed poetry consultant to the Library of Congress for 1970-71. *Allegiances,* his latest collection of poems, was published by Harper & Row earlier this year.

BETH HARVOR* lives in Ottawa, has been published in Canadian magazines and has twice won awards on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's New Canadian Writing series.

CHARLES W. MILLARD will assume responsibilities in January as Curator of Nineteenth-century Art at the Los Angeles County Museum.

PATRICK CRUTTWELL teaches in the English Department of Kenyon College.

J. MITCHELL MORSE, a professor at Temple University and author of *The Sympathetic Alien* and *Matters of Style,* has just completed another book, *The Irrelevant English Teacher; or, How to Overcome That Guilty Feeling.*

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD teaches in the English Department of Amherst College. His next article for THE HUDSON REVIEW will be on Robert Frost.

JOSEPH BENNETT, a founding editor of this Review, has been on an extended leave of absence since 1966. He has traveled widely in the near and far East, and is at present living in Kandy, Ceylon. The selections from his Egyptian Diary published here date from 1968.

Asterisk indicates a new contributor.

Our special thanks go to John Szarkowski, Curator of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, for introducing us to the work of Paul Vanderbilt and Joel Meyerowitz; and to Roger Sale, Professor of English at the University of Washington, Seattle, and a regular contributor, for research in connection with Chief Seattle's address.

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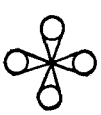

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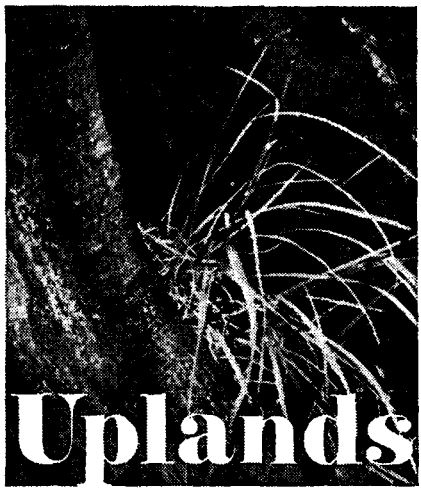

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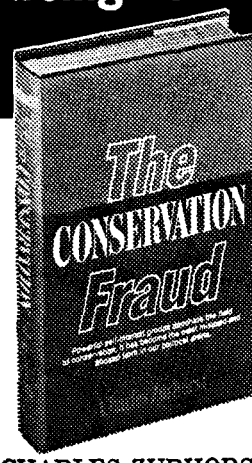

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TIR has printed Thomas Vogler on Ralph Ellison along with a section of Ellison's new novel, Richard Howard on John Wieners, and Ralph Mills on Galway Kinnell with new works by each poet; stories by Robert Coover and W. S. Merwin; poems by Donald Justice, Michael Benedikt, Philip Levine, and Bill Knott.

Future issues of TIR will include the criticism of Robert Scholes on Meta-fiction, T. R. Whitaker on David Jones with new poems by Jones, and L. S. Dembo on Carl Rakosi with new Rakosi poems; the meta-fiction of Robert Coover; stories by Robert Kelly and Steve Katz; poetry by Stephen Berg, John Logan, W. S. Merwin, and others.

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Editorial

"Ecology" has become a key word for our time. It does not, like some big words rightly mistrusted, refer to an ideal whose vitality has been exhausted, but to one whose full meaning is still in the process of formation. It points to a new idea (new, at least, to western man) whose time has come: the idea that if the species is to survive, man must recognize his dependence on nature and live in cooperation with her as her friend, rather than in opposition to her as her conqueror. Here in the United States, and throughout the industrialized, western world, the realization is at last beginning to dawn on us that we are living on the brink of an enormous catastrophe, and that civilization may be totally undermined, and possibly the human race itself wiped out, or reduced to a suffering fragment, within the next half-century. And not through nuclear war, though that remains as a terrible possibility, but through the uncontrolled degradation and exploitation of the natural environment and the consequent destruction of the biological underpinnings of life. There is no need here to rehearse the frightening particulars; they are in the news every day, and almost every day new books and articles are published giving fresh details of our peril. All the signs warn us of dangers present and to come. As of 1970, ecology is not, as some naive commentators have suggested, a passing craze or political red herring, but humanity's inevitable and lasting concern.

If man is to survive (and the time is getting very late), it will be thanks to a profound change in his own awareness of himself: to a spiritual change, in other words, of at least the magnitude of those which accompanied the birth of Christianity and the rise of modern science. And his new self-awareness will have to be, in some sense which is still fully to be explored and developed, "ecological." We may hope (provided we do not use the hope as an excuse for relaxing our own efforts) that this change is even now taking place and that the attitude of many young people is clear evidence of it. They are understandably dissatisfied with a civilization, a "system," that has presented them with the prospect of a future earth grossly overpopulated, stripped of its natural beau-

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ties and depleted of its resources, impoverished, poisoned and polluted—with the threats of nuclear war and total civic breakdown always in the background. The suspicion is growing, and not only among the young, that—despite the great material benefits it has undoubtedly provided—something may be wrong with such a system and with the image of man and of nature which gave birth to it. Here, the spiritual change is crucial: if it comes, the system, too, will change; if it does not come, no merely political or social revolution will save us, nor will any amount of technological tinkering, or bolstering of the *status quo*.

A literary review, it has often been pointed out, is not primarily designed for dealing with immediate practical issues; by performing its function conscientiously, however, it can contribute to the deeper changes taking place in society and culture, and help us to understand and evaluate them. In this issue, we have assembled poems, essays, photographs and a book review in a special section devoted to "Poetry and Ecology": "poetry" being understood here in its widest sense as the power of the imagination engaged in the forming of a new sensibility. This selection will, we hope, give some valid perspectives on the vitally necessary change described above, and make a modest contribution towards furthering it.

—FREDERICK MORGAN

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WENDELL BERRY

A Secular Pilgrimage

One of the most exciting and vital kinds of poetry being written now in this country is nature poetry. There is some danger of oversimplification in saying so, for you will not find many poets, if any, who are writing only about nature; those who are writing the best nature poems are also writing well on other subjects: the city, love, marriage, politics, war, history, art, and so on. But running through the work of such poets as Gary Snyder, Denise Levertov and A. R. Ammons,[1] there is a sustained attentiveness to nature and to the relation between man and nature.

"Nature poetry" is a clumsy term, and it presents immediate difficulties, for there is a sense in which most poetry is nature poetry; most poets, even those least interested in nature, have found in the natural world an abundant stock of symbols and metaphors. But I will use the term here to refer only to those poets who seem to me to have turned to the natural world, not as a source of imagery, but as subject and inspiration—as Marvell and Wordsworth and Thoreau (in his prose) turned to it. With those men nature was of primary interest; by seeing into its life they intuited the presence of a shaping and sustaining spirit within it. With poets such as Donne or Pope or Shelley the particulars of nature were only of secondary interest insofar as they "stood for" an abstraction that interested the poet primarily and that he had in mind before ever turning to nature.

The nature poets of our own time characteristically approach their subject with a sort of openness of spirit and imagination, allowing the meaning and the movement of the poem to suggest themselves out of the facts. Their art has an implicit and essential humility, a reluctance to impose on things as they are, a willingness to relate to the world as student and servant, a wish to be included in the natural order rather than to conquer nature, a wish to discover the natural form rather than to create new forms that would

[1] These poets are representative of the sort of interest in nature that I am talking about. I don't mean to imply either that they are our only nature poets or that they are the only ones whose work I value.

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be exclusively human. To create is to involve oneself as fully, as consciously and imaginatively, as possible in the Creation, to be immersed in the world. In "Some Notes on Organic Form" Denise Levertov has said: "For me, back of the idea of organic form is the concept that there is a form in all things (and in our experience) which the poet can discover and reveal." "Form," she says, "is never more than the *revelation* of content." And she speaks of "A religious devotion to the truth, to the splendor of the authentic. . . ."

As I have already made clear, this poetry arises out of a state of mind that could very accurately be described as religious. I am probably giving that adjective a broader application than it usually has. My use of it might, I suppose, be defined as primitive. I would apply it, for instance, to the sense of the presence of mystery or divinity in the world, or even to the attitudes of wonder or awe or humility before the works of the Creation. And I will never use the word here to refer to any of those revealed certainties that are so large a part of the lore of the various churches. A better term than religious might be worshipful, in the sense of *valuing* what one does not entirely understand, or aspiring beyond what may be known. There is a passage in John Stewart Collis's book *The Triumph of the Tree* that will serve perfectly as a definition of the state of mind I am talking about; he is speaking of primitive man:

> Having become aware of objects and begun to name them, this Earliest Man became aware of something else. It is a remarkable fact that no sooner had he looked closely at the phenomena of Nature than he began to concern himself with, not the visible object in front of him which he could clearly see, but with an invisible object which he could not see at all. He looked at the trees, the rocks, the rivers, the animals, and having looked at them he at once began to talk about something *in them* which he had never seen and never heard of. This thing inside the objective appearance was called a god. No one forced man at this time to think about gods, there was no tradition imposing it upon him—and yet his first thoughts seem to have turned towards a Thing behind the thing, a Force behind or within the appearance. Thus *worship* . . .

The peculiar thrust and aspiration of the contemporary nature poetry might be fairly accurately suggested by calling it a secular pilgrimage—at least that is a phrase that has begun to accompany

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it in my own thinking. It is secular because it takes place outside of, or without reference to, the institutions of religion, and it does not seek any institutional shrine or holy place; it is in search of the world. But it is a pilgrimage nevertheless because it is a religious quest. It does not seek the world of inert materiality that is postulated both by the Heaven-oriented churches and by the exploitive industries; it seeks the world of the Creation, the created world in which the Creator, the formative and quickening spirit, is still immanent and at work. This sense of immanence is given memorably in two lines of Guy Davenport's long poem, *Flowers and Leaves:* ". . . the ghost who wears out inert rock/ is fanatic with metamorphosis . . ."

I begin, then, with the assumption that perhaps the great disaster of human history is one that happened to or within religion: that is the conceptual division between the holy and the world, the excerpting of the Creator from the Creation. Collis is worth quoting again in this connection; though perhaps it may be argued that he is wrong about the cause, I think he is correct in his description of what happened:

> . . . whereas under polytheism the gods were intimately connected with the earth, and stimulated veneration for it, under monotheism deity was extracted from the earth. God was promoted to higher regions. He went completely out of sight. It became possible to fear God without fearing Nature—nay, to love God (whatever was meant) and to hate his creations.

If God was not in the world, then obviously the world was a thing of inferior importance, or of no importance at all. Those who were disposed to exploit it were thus free to do so. And this split in public attitudes was inevitably mirrored in the lives of individuals: a man could aspire to Heaven with his mind and his heart while destroying the earth, and his fellow men, with his hands.

The human or earthly problem has always been one of behavior, or morality: How should a man live in this world? Our institutional Christianity has usually tended to give a non-answer to this question: He should live for the next world. Which completely ignores the *fact* that the here is antecedent to the hereafter, and that, indeed, the Gospels would seem to make one's fate in the hereafter dependent on one's behavior here. Some varieties of Christianity have held that one should despise the things of this

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world—which made it all but mandatory that they should be neglected as well. In that way men of conscience—or men who might reasonably have been expected to be men of conscience—have been led to abandon the world, and their own posterity, to the exploiters and ruiners. So exclusively focused on the hereafter, they have been neither here nor there.

This schism in man's sense of himself was protested at the end of the eighteenth century by William Blake, who wrote (of the time when "the whole creation will be consumed and appear infinite and holy"): "But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul is to expunged. . . ." It was protested by Henry David Thoreau, who wrote in his journal on June 21, 1840: "The body is the first proselyte the Soul makes. Our life is but the Soul made known by its fruits, the body. The whole duty of man may be expressed in one line—Make to yourself a perfect body." And it has been protested in our own time by the Welsh clergyman, R. S. Thomas, in his poem, "The Minister":

> Is there no passion in Wales? There is none
> Except in the racked hearts of men like Morgan,
> Condemned to wither and starve in the cramped cell
> Of thought their fathers made them.
> Protestantism—the adroit castrator
> Of art; the bitter negation
> Of song and dance and the heart's innocent joy—
> You have botched our flesh and left us only the soul's
> Terrible impotence in a warm world.

The contempt for the world or the hatred of it, that is exemplified both by the wish to exploit it for the sake of cash and by the willingness to despise it for the sake of "salvation," seems to have reached a terrifying climax in our own time. The rift between soul and body, the Creator and the Creation, has admitted the entrance into the world of the machinery of the world's doom. We no longer feel ourselves threatened by the God-made doomsday of Revelation, or by the natural world's-end foreseen by science. We face an apocalypse of *our own* making—a man-made cosmic terror. The old-fashioned doomsdays of religion and nature were terrifying enough for mere humans, perhaps, but look-

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ing back from the perspective of our own time, we can see that their meanings were not entirely negative. The Doomsday of God, as described in the Bible, in spite of the terror and the destruction, was at the same time to be the triumph of divinity, of virtue, of spiritual value. In the doomsday of nature, the burning out of the sun or whatever, the life of the world would presumably be survived by natural law, the cosmic forces that brought it into being in the first place, and might bring into being another of the same kind or a better. But the doomsday of man is entirely negative—creation in reverse, pure destruction—destruction which will lead, not to the promise of new life, but to nothing. Should we accomplish the destruction we are now capable of, we will destroy not only ourselves and the world, but also whatever right we may once have had to live. Perhaps many men have come, like Job, to wish that they had never been born. But until ours, no generation ever had to face the possibility that its extinction at birth might have been a benefit to the world. Such is the drastic and fearful change we have made in our life and in our sense of ourselves. How did it happen? It could only have happened by our failure to care enough for the world, to be humble enough before it, to think competently enough of its welfare. Rather than being ruled by the thought of the world's good, which is identical with our own most meaningful good, we have set up the false standards of national interest, power, production, personal comfort or pride or greed—or the desire to get to Heaven, which, if it involves neglect of the life of the world, becomes only a rarefied form of gluttony.

Do we really hate the world? Are we really contemptuous of it? Have we really ignored its nature and its needs and the problems of its health? The evidence against us is everywhere. It is in our wanton and thoughtless misuse of the land and the other natural resources, in our wholesale pollution of the water and air, in strip mining, in our massive use and misuse of residual poisons in agriculture and elsewhere, in our willingness to destroy whole landscapes in the course of what we call "construction" and "progress," in the earth-destroying and population-destroying weapons we use in our wars, in the planet-destroying weapons now ready for use in the arsenals of the most powerful and violent nations of the world. It is in our hatred of races and nations. It is in our

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willingness to honor profit above everything except victory. It is in our willingness to spend more on war than on everything else. It is in our unappeasable restlessness, our nomadism, our anxiousness to get to another place or to "the top" or "somewhere" or to Heaven or to the moon.

Our hatred of the world and our destructiveness are most insidiously and dangerously present in the constantly widening discrepancy between our power and our needs, our means and our ends. This is because of machinery and what we call efficiency. In order to build a road we destroy several thousand acres of farmland forever, all in perfect optimism, without regret, believing that we have gained much and lost nothing. In order to build a dam, which like all human things will be temporary, we destroy a virgin stream forever, believing that we have conquered nature and added significantly to our stature. In order to burn cheap coal we destroy a mountain forever, believing, in the way of lovers of progress, that what is of immediate advantage to us must be a permanent benefit to the universe. Fighting in Vietnam in the interest, as we say and would have ourselves believe, of the Vietnamese people, we have destroyed their villages, their croplands, their forests, herded the people into concentration camps, and in every way diminished the possibility of life in that country; and the civilian casualties are vastly greater than the military. In order to protect ourselves against Russia or China, or whoever our enemy will be in ten years, we have prepared weapons the use of which will, we know, involve our own destruction and the destruction of the world as well. Great power has always been blinding to those who wield it. Those who follow blindly in the wake of their own power practice hypocrisy by reflex; it is their natural camouflage. And in this age of super machines and super weapons hypocrisy is not only sinful, it is lethal.

A man cannot hate the world and hate his own kind without hating himself. The familiar idea that a man's governing religious obligation is to "save" himself, procure *for himself* an eternal life, is based on a concept of individualism that is both vicious and absurd. And this religious concept is the counterpart, and to a considerable extent the cause, of the vicious secular individualism that suggests that a man's governing obligation is to enrich himself in this world. But man cannot live alone—he cannot have

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values alone, religious or otherwise, any more than he can live by bread alone. Such desires can live only at the world's expense, and at the expense of one's own earthly life which one inevitably devalues in devaluing the earth. So when a man seeks to live on the earth only for the eternal perpetuation, or only for the economic enrichment, of a life that he has devalued and despised, he is involved not only in absurdity but in perversion—a perversion that has now become the deadly disease of the world.

In *The Triumph of the Tree,* Collis outlines a most useful and clarifying historical scheme. First, he says, there was the "Era of Mythology," when men believed that they should venerate the world because it was inhabited by spirits and gods; they were frugal and considerate in their use of the natural bounty for fear of offending the resident divinities. Next came the "Era of Economics" when the Creation began to be valued in terms of cash; the sacred groves were cut down and the gods took no revenge, and so the trees were sawed into lumber and put up for sale. This era built into an orgy of exploitation which has now "brought us to the edge of disaster." At this point we may, *if* we are able to make ourselves wise enough and humble enough, enter an "Era of Ecology," when we will utilize "the science of achieving an equilibrium with the environment." We will be as protective of the natural world as our primitive forebears, but this time for reasons that are knowledgeable and conscious rather than superstitious. We will realize and live in the realization that nature is not inexhaustible and that, in fact, we have already used up more than half of its wealth. We will realize that we do not live *on* the earth, but with and within its life. We will realize that the earth is not dead like the concept of property, but as vividly and intricately alive as a man or a woman, and that there is a delicate interdependence between its life and our own. We will take for granted what our farmers have had to learn with surprise and pain and to their cost, and what most politicians and businessmen have never learned yet: it is not the area of a country that makes its value or its most meaningful strength, but its life, the depth and richness of its topsoil.

But Collis's vision of this last era, this future in which man may live in harmony with the world is not merely scientific, though science will provide many of the necessary insights and methods;

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his vision is also religious. He accepts the contemporary decline of the organized religions, and finds hope in it:

> Both polytheism and monotheism have done their work. The images are broken, the idols are all overthrown. This is now regarded as a very irreligious age. But perhaps it only means that the mind is moving from one state to another. The next stage is not a belief in many gods. It is not a belief in one god. It is not a belief at all—not a conception in the intellect. It is an extension of consciousness so that we may *feel* God, or, if you will, an experience of harmony, an intimation of the Divine, which will link us again with *animism,* the experience of unity lost at the in-break of self-consciousness. This will atone for our sin (which means *separation*); it will be our at-one-ment.

And here I can reasonably go back to the subject of poetry, for it is clear that if such an era is to be achieved—and it is either that or the apocalypse of technology—it will not be by the mechanical obedience of most men to new rules set up by a few. In the first place, men do not often obey mechanically; they tend to be good only in so far as they understand goodness. Much of our present destructiveness, for instance, is in defiance of rules that have been in existence for many years, but whose applicability to present lives has been blurred by new circumstances or obscured by old rhetoric. If the rules are to apply and be observed they must not only be written and publicized and learned, but understood, *felt,* accommodated to the particularities of the lives of particular people. If it is well to consider the needs of the earth as one's own needs, that must be carried beyond abstraction into the specific relation between each man and his place in the world. There must be new contact between men and the earth; the earth must be newly seen and heard and felt and smelled and tasted; there must be a renewal of the wisdom that comes with knowing clearly the pain and the pleasure and the risk and the responsibility of being alive in this world. This is only to say that such an era, like all eras, will arrive and remain by the means of a new speech—a speech that will cause the world to live and thrive in men's minds, that will alert them to the particularities of the world's nature and needs and of their own place and role.

"Poetry," Thoreau said, "is nothing but healthy speech. . . ." By which he meant, I suppose, speech that is not only healthy in itself but conducive to the health of the speaker, giving him a true and vigorous relation to the world.

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In the first of his books on haiku, R. H. Blyth says, in a passage that is peculiarly suggestive in the present context: "Poetry is that excess, that over-abundance which makes morality bearable and virtue alive. . . ." Also: "Poetry is a return to nature: to our own nature, to that of each thing, and to that of all things." Also: "Poetry is interpenetration"—and he quotes Marcus Aurelius, a passage that could have been written by an ecologist in our own day: "All things are interwoven each with [the] other: the tie is sacred, and nothing, or next to nothing is alien to aught else." And poetry, Blyth says, is that sacred tie. To complete his thought, he is very emphatic in refusing to account for poetry in purely literary terms: "Poetry is not the words written in a book, but the mode of activity of the mind of the poet." In other words, it is not only a technique and a medium, but a power as well, a power to apprehend the unity, the sacred tie, that holds life together.

The poetry of this century, like the world in this century, has suffered from the schism in the modern consciousness. It has been turned back upon itself, fragmented, obscured in its sense of its function. Like all other human pursuits, it has had to suffer, and to some extent enact, the modern crisis: the failure of the past to teach us to deal with the present, or to envision and prepare for a desirable future. It has often seemed to lack wholeness and wisdom. One is tempted to say that some poets have grown too civilized, have become hive poets. In his book, *Spring in Washington,* Louis J. Halle expresses some strong reservations about the hive mentality:

> It is curious how the preoccupations of the hive fill us, driving out all memory of the universe into which we were born. Perhaps the whole human race may be said to suffer from amnesia, not knowing whence it came or why it finds itself here. But we inhabitants of the hive suffer from double amnesia, one case within another, and are removed one stage further from the ultimate reality in which we have our beginning and our end. We have forgotten that we live in the universe, and that our civilization itself is merely an elaboration of the palm-leaf hat that one of our ancestors tried on ten thousand years ago to ward off the sun, a more complicated and ample version that now not only wards off the sun but shuts out the view. We have lost ourselves within it.

Thomas Merton wrote that, "The new consciousness which isolates man in his own knowing mind and separates him from the world

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around him (which he does not know as it is in itself but only as it is in his mind) makes wisdom impossible because it severs the communion between subject and object, man and nature, upon which wisdom depends." But he says in the same essay that in Greek tragedy, "The catharsis of pity and terror delivers the participant from *hubris* and restores him to an awareness of his place in the scheme of things. . . ." I think that this is to a considerable degree true also of the best nature poetry, which seeks expressly the power to deepen our insight into the very relationship Merton is talking about. It seeks to give us a sense of our proper place in the scheme of things. Its thrust is toward the realization of the presence of other life. Man, it keeps reminding us, is the center of the universe only in the sense that wherever he is it *seems* to him that he is at the center of his own horizon; the truth is that he is only a part of a vast complex of life, on the totality and the order of which he is blindly dependent. Since that totality and order have never yet come within the rational competence of our race, and even now do not seem likely ever to do so, the natural effect of such poetry is the religious one of humility and awe. It does not seem farfetched to assume that this religious effect might, in turn, produce the moral effect of care and competence and frugality in the use of the world.

As I have already suggested, I think that there is a considerable body of contemporary nature poetry in existence in this country that incorporates the essential double awareness of the physical presence of the natural world and of the immanence of mystery or divinity in the physical presence. This poetry, of course, did not materialize solely out of the awareness of nature. It has an extensive poetical ancestry of which it is conscious, and I think one may go far toward saying what this new poetry is like by hypothesizing at some length about its ancestry. It will necessarily be hypothesizing, because the ancestors I will speak of are the ones that I happen to be most aware of myself; I think that they are likely ones, but I cannot guarantee that they are the ones best known to other poets.

Though English poetry is full of nature *imagery,* and though it has had a constant interest in one or another of the *concepts* of nature, it seems to me surprisingly seldom that the immediate and particular manifestations of nature are acknowledged and looked

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at for their own sake. The natural world does impinge powerfully and unforgettably upon the consciousness of Geoffrey Chaucer at the beginning of his Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales;* though he is setting off on a pilgrimage, he cannot resist the attraction of the flowers, the birdsong, the damp earth and fresh sunlight of the April morning. But so far as I know, nature was not so openly turned to again until, in the seventeenth century, Andrew Marvell wrote such poems as "The Garden" and "Upon Appleton House." In the latter, his most ambitious poem, there is a clear gradation or ascent from the purely human context of the house and its family heritage, to the domesticated nature of the fields along the river, to the forest. The poem is notable, for one reason among many others, because it shows clearly that Marvell was thoughtful of wild nature and valued it in a way that was rare in English poetry before the romantic period. As the poem moves from house to forest, his imagination quickens and he becomes more and more exuberant both in mood and imagery. In the stanza where he turns from the house to the fields, he makes this stunning acknowledgement of the wildness and mystery in nature; at this point the wildness is not so much in the scene as in an awesome power to change and transform that Marvell senses *in* the scene, suddenly, and apparently to his surprise, and which his imagination seizes upon and emulates:

> And now to the Abbyss I pass
> Of that unfathomable Grass,
> Where Men like Grashoppers appear,
> But Grashoppers are Gyants there . . .

And then, the fields having been mowed and grazed, the river is flooded, and Marvell takes "Sanctuary in the Wood," which he calls "this yet green, yet growing Ark." The wood he describes as a natural temple, where one may read *"Natures mystick Book."* And the poet emerges as a priest in another striking passage that is almost Whitmanian:

> The Oak-Leaves me embroyder all,
> Between which Caterpillars crawl:
> And Ivy, with familiar trails,

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Me licks, and clasps, and curles, and hales.
Under this *antick Cope* I move
Like some great *Prelate of the Grove* . . .

And there is at last complete submergence into this wild place; he becomes one with it, in a kind of baptism or planting or crucifixion:

Bind me ye *Woodbines* in your 'twines,
Curle me about ye gadding *Vines,*
And Oh so close your Circles lace,
That I may never leave this Place:
But, lest your Fetters prove too weak,
Ere I your Silken Bondage break,
Do you, *O Brambles,* chain me too,
And courteous *Briars* nail me through.

In the same century Henry Vaughan wrote poems that acknowledge, like the thirty-third Psalm, that "the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." He apparently took to heart the exultant spirit of Psalm 104 where it is said that the Lord created the world "in wisdom" and that he rejoices in his work. It is as though he read literally Christ's admonition to "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow . . ." In his poem "The Bird" he says that "All things that be praise Him, and had/ Their lesson taught them when first made. // So hills and valleys into singing break . . ." The very stones "are deep in admiration." And Thomas Traherne wrote in one of his prose meditations:

> Suppose a river, or a drop of water, an apple or a sand, an ear of corn, or an herb: God knoweth infinite excellencies in it more than we: he seeth how it relateth to angels and men; how it proceedeth from the most perfect Lover to the most perfectly beloved; how it representeth all his attributes; how it conduceth in its place, by the best of means to the best of ends: and for this cause it cannot be beloved too much. God the Author and God the End is to be beloved in it; angels and men are to be beloved in it; and it is highly to be esteemed for all their sakes.

Later there came Blake's well-known formula:

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To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.

Wordsworth virtually made this his life's work—this reaching into the life of nature toward its informing spirit—

a dark
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, makes them cling together
In one society.

This led him, in *The Prelude,* to an affirmation that is epic both in scale and statement:

Should the whole frame of earth by inward throes
Be wrenched, or fire come down from far to scorch
Her pleasant habitations, and dry up
Old Ocean, in his bed left singed and bare,
Yet would the Living Presence still subsist
Victorious, and composure would ensue,
And kindlings like the morning . . .

But though Wordsworth was preoccupied with the experience of nature, there is remarkably little in the way of particular observation to be found in him. What absorbed him was that Presence that loomed behind created things and was manifested in them. He seemed able to "see into the life of things" without having to scrutinize very closely the things themselves.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, more conventionally religious than Wordsworth, had the same eagerness to thrust through appearances toward a realization of the divine. With Hopkins, this was not the anonymous Presence of Wordsworth's poems, but God, Jehovah, who broods over his creation in which his glory is manifest. But Hopkins was nevertheless a keener observer than Wordsworth; he loved the physical facts of nature, and took pains to capture their look and feel and movement. In the accuracy of his observation, and in the onomatopoeia of his diction and rhythms,

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he is clearly a forebear of the contemporary nature poets. "God's Grandeur" not only gives a sense of his technique but also of his critical values with respect to nature and civilization:

> The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
> It will flame out like shining from shook foil;
> It gathers to a greatness like the ooze of oil
> Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
> Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
> And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
> And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
> Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

The earliest American ancestor, among the poets, is Whitman. I think that some of our poets are very close in attitude and affinity, though not often in manner, to these passages from "Song of Myself:"

> My tread scares the wood-drake and wood-duck, on my distant and day-long ramble;
> They rise together—they slowly circle around.
> I believe in those wing'd purposes,
> And acknowledge red, yellow, white, playing within me,
> And consider green and violet, and the tufted crown, intentional . . .
>
> *
>
> All truths wait in all things;
> They neither hasten their own delivery, nor resist it . . .
>
> *
>
> I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars,
> And that the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and the egg of the wren . . .
>
> *

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I find I incorporate gneiss, coal, long-threaded moss, fruits,
grains, esculent roots,
And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over . . .

Among the American poets who began writing early in our own century, there was a prevalent distrust of abstractions, especially those abstractions that had begun to be credited automatically by the society. They felt that men and the world had been poorly served by these abstractions, and it is clearer now than in their own time how right they were. But they also realized that men's minds were insulated and benumbed by their platitudes and clichés—blinded and deafened, exiled from the world. There is a memorable poem on this subject by Wallace Stevens; it is called "On the Road Home":

It was when I said,
"There is no such thing as the truth,"
That the grapes seemed fatter.
The fox ran out of his hole.

William Carlos Williams, in *Paterson,* said emphatically that man must turn to the world to learn whatever he would know:

—Say it, no ideas but in things—
nothing but the blank faces of the houses
and cylindrical trees
bent, forked by preconception and accident—
split, furrowed, creased, mottled, stained—
secret—into the body of the light!

In Canto LXXXI, Ezra Pound wrote, whether intentionally or not, some lines that could serve as the epigraph of the science of ecology. Again the message is to escape the abstractions; man will have to break out of the context of his own assumptions and measure himself by the truer measure of "the green world":

The ant's a centaur in his dragon world.
Pull down thy vanity, it is not man
Made courage, or made order, or made grace,

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Pull down thy vanity, I say pull down.
Learn of the green world what can be thy place . . .

And in a late poem entitled "Directive," Robert Frost wrote both a proposal and an enactment of a secular pilgrimage—a return to the wilderness in order to be restored, made whole, made one with nature. The poem is explicitly religious, bearing allusions to the tenth chapter of Matthew ("he that loseth his life . . . shall find it"), to the 18th chapter of Matthew ("become as little children"), to the healing water of Bethesda, to the communion and the Holy Grail. The poet appears frankly in the role of priest, howbeit a slyly humorous one. Though it is hardly a typical Frost poem, I think it is his best.

Back out of all this now too much for us,
Back in a time made simple by the loss
Of detail, burned, dissolved, and broken off
Like graveyard marble sculpture in the weather,
There is a house that is no more a house . . .

. . . . . .

Your destination and your destiny's
A brook that was the water of the house,
Cold as a spring as yet so near its source,
Too lofty and original to rage.
(We know the valley streams that when aroused
Will leave their tatters hung on barb and thorn.)
I have kept hidden in the instep arch
Of an old cedar at the waterside
A broken drinking goblet like the Grail
Under a spell so the wrong ones can't find it,
So can't get saved, as Saint Mark says they mustn't.
(I stole the goblet from the children's playhouse.)
Here are your waters and your watering place.
Drink and be whole again beyond confusion.

A more innately religious man than any of the four Americans I have just named, the English poet D. H. Lawrence was, I think, one of the best nature poets. He seems to have come very naturally

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to the role of priest-poet, and unlike most of the poets of his generation he could speak of spirit or mystery without embarrassment. There are many poems of his that I could quote to advantage, but I will quote only the one entitled "Shadows", one of the *Last Poems,* written when he knew he was dying:

And if tonight my soul may find her peace
in sleep, and sink in good oblivion,
and in the morning wake like a new-opened flower
then I have been dipped again in God, and new-created.

And if, as weeks go round, in the dark of the moon
my spirit darkens and goes out, and soft strange gloom
pervades my movements and my thoughts and words
then I shall know that I am walking still
with God, we are close together now the moon's in shadow.

And if, as autumn deepens and darkens
I feel the pain of falling leaves, and stems that break in storms
and trouble and dissolution and distress
and then the softness of deep shadows folding, folding
round my soul and spirit, around my lips
so sweet, like a swoon, or more like the drowse of a low, sad
song

singing darker than the nightingale, on, on to the solstice
and the silence of short days, the silence of the year, the
shadow,
then I shall know that my life is moving still
with the dark earth, and drenched
with the deep oblivion of earth's lapse and renewal.

And if, in the changing phases of man's life
I fall in sickness and in misery
my wrists seem broken and my heart seems dead
and strength is gone, and my life
is only the leavings of a life:

and still, among it all, snatches of lovely oblivion, and snatches

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of renewal
odd, wintry flowers upon the withered stem, yet new, strange
flowers
such as my life has not brought forth before, new blossoms of
me—

then I must know that still
I am in the hands [of] the unknown God,
he is breaking me down to his own oblivion
to send me forth on a new morning, a new man.

Nearer to us, there was Theodore Roethke who wrote, toward the end of his life, poems of visionary peace-making with the world. This is the ending of one called "Journey to the Interior":

As a blind man, lifting a curtain, knows it is morning,
I know this change:
On one side of silence there is no smile;
But when I breathe with the birds,
The spirit of wrath becomes the spirit of blessing,
And the dead begin from their dark to sing in my sleep.

That gives a possible line of descent through the history of poetry in England and America. But before speaking of my contemporaries, I want to suggest two other influences that I think have come to be strongly felt.

The first is that of Oriental poetry—its directness and brevity, its involvement with the life of things, its sense that the poem does not create the poetry but is the revelation of a poetry that is in the world. Here is a poem "Written on the Wall at Chang's Hermitage" by Tu Fu, a Chinese poet of the eighth century; the translation is by Kenneth Rexroth, who has written excellent nature poems of his own:

It is Spring in the mountains.
I come alone seeking you.
The sound of chopping wood echos
Between the silent peaks.
The streams are still icy.

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There is snow on the trail.
At sunset I reach your grove
In the stony mountain pass.
You want nothing, although at night
You can see the aura of gold
And silver ore all around you.
You have learned to be gentle
As the mountain deer you have tamed.
The way back forgotten, hidden
Away, I become like you,
An empty boat, floating, adrift.

These qualities perhaps reach their height of refinement in haiku, an art that developed both out of and into a complex awareness of nature:

I am one
Who eats his breakfast,
Gazing at the morning-glories.

Basho

Over my legs,
Stretched out at ease,
The billowing clouds.

Issa

Spring departs,
Trembling, in the grasses
Of the fields.

Issa

"A Haiku," Blyth says, "is not a poem, it is not literature; it is a hand beckoning, a door half-opened, a mirror wiped clean. It is a way of returning to nature. . . . It is a way in which the cold winter rain, the swallows of evening, even the very day in its hotness, and the length of the night become truly alive, share in our humanity, speak their own silent and expressive language."

The second influence is that of the prose writings of Henry David Thoreau. In his poems, Thoreau usually seems weighted

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and bound by the vagueness and inflated diction of most romantic nature poetry. It was only in prose that he could break free into the presence of the life around him and become a poet. In his prose we see, maybe for the first time, the poet-as-American, speaking out of the life of an American place—a new place, relatively speaking, the life of which had not been much spoken of by white poets or writers of any kind, and which therefore demanded a clear direct vision. We find this clarity and directness in his prose. We also find a painstaking accuracy of observation, a most unsolemn and refreshing reverence, a sense of being involved in nature, and a rare exuberance and wit. These are samples from his *Journal:*

> You tell of active labors, of works of art, and wars the past summer; meanwhile the tortoise eggs underlie this turmoil.
>
> The air over these fields is a foundry full of moulds for casting bluebirds' warbles. Any sound uttered now would take that form. . . .
>
> The fishes are going up the brooks as they open. They are dispersing themselves through the fields and woods, imparting new life into them. They are taking their places under the shelving banks and in the dark swamps. The water running down meets the fishes running up. They hear the latest news. Spring-aroused fishes are running up our veins too.

Now, to give some idea of the contemporary work, I will quote from the three poets I mentioned at the beginning. Very different from each other, they are all alike in seeking a new awareness of nature and their own place in it.

Denise Levertov is a poet deeply interested in myth, as many modern poets have been. With her this is not an antiquarian interest. She has, I think, no wish merely to reconstruct old myths and observances in homage to the past or in opposition to the present; she is interested in them as clues to the meaning and nature of our deepest needs. In her poems, myth never leads inward to a purely imaginative or purely human interior, but outward toward the world. To imagine is to realize, to sense the authentic. The myth is the acceptance and the enactment of the bond between mankind and the world—as in "The Novices," a poem very different from Frost's "Directive," but closely parallel to it:

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They enter the bare wood, drawn
by a clear-obscure summons they fear
and have no choice but to heed.

A rustling underfoot, a
long trail to go, the thornbushes grow
across the dwindling paths.

Until the small clearing, where they
anticipate violence, knowing some rite
to be performed, and compelled to it.

The man moves forward, the boy
sees what he means to do: from an oaktree
a chain runs at an angle into earth

and they pit themselves to uproot it,
dogged and frightened, to pull the iron
out of the earth's heart.

But from the further depths of the wood
as they strain and weigh on the great chain
appears the spirit,

the wood-demon who summoned them.
And he is not bestial, not fierce
but an old woodsman,

gnarled, shabby, smelling of smoke and sweat,
of a bear's height and shambling like a bear.
Yet his presence is a spirit's presence

and awe takes their breath.
Gentle and rough, laughing a little,
he makes his will known:

not for an act of force he called them,
for no rite of obscure violence
but that they might look about them

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and see intricate branch and bark,
stars of moss and the old scars
left by dead men's saws,

and not ask what the chain was.
To leave the open fields
and enter the forest,

that was the rite.
Knowing there was mystery, they could go.
Go back now! And he receded

among the multitude of forms,
the twists and shadows they saw now, listening
to the hum of the world's wood.

A. R. Ammons studied science when he was in college, and his poems have managed to incorporate the viewpoint, the curiosity and even the vocabulary of the biologist. He tends to be a poet, not of natural objects, but of natural processes, and so his language seeks to particularize movement and relationship rather than appearance. But if his vision is scientific, it is also mystical: "I admit to mystery/ in the obvious . . ." If he is fascinated by the study of the interweavings of energies into the natural ecology, he is also fascinated and awe-struck by the unexplainable: "mind rising/ from the physical chemistries . . ." If he finds grounds for affirmation in his comprehension of the world, he finds the possibility of even greater affirmation in the limits of his comprehension: "I know nothing;/ still, I cannot help singing . . ." If all that a man can understand were all there is, if there were no mystery, then the mind would be trapped and damned within its limits; one should rejoice in understanding, but rejoice also in failing to understand, for in that failure the mind is set free.

Some of Ammons' poems involve an explicit worshipfulness, which consists in the understanding of the failure to understand, the mind's graceful, and grateful, sense of its boundaries:

I will show you
the underlying that takes no image to itself,

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cannot be shown or said,
but weaves in and out of moons and bladderweeds,
is all and
beyond destruction
because created fully in no
particular form . . .

It should be emphasized that the divinity here is sensed as "underlying" rather than overlooking—not the withdrawn author of forms and substances, but one of their properties. His worship is secular, speculative, curious, meditative, studious.

It is one of the obligations of his religious vision to refuse the presumption of the closed forms of a humanistic art. Form, he believes, is in all things, but the forms comprehended in nature or achieved in art are necessarily partial forms, fragments, inferior to the form of the whole creation which can be neither comprehended nor imagined:

I see narrow orders, limited tightness, but will
not run to that easy victory:
still around the looser, wider forces work:
I will try
to fasten into order enlarging grasps of disorder, widening
scope, but enjoying the freedom that
Scope eludes my grasp, that there is no finality of vision,
that I have perceived nothing completely
that tomorrow a new walk is a new walk.

Of these three poets, Gary Snyder is the most austere, the one willing to venture farthest from the human assumptions and enclosures. His poem "Piute Creek" is a spiritual discipline in which he confronts the non-human time and space of the Sierra Nevada. His realization of the smallness and shortness of his life in relation to the world's life is of such intensity as to make him virtually absent from the place and from his own sense of things. He is present in the poem finally only as another creature, along with moon and rock and juniper and the wild animals. And in proportion as he withdraws himself and his human claims, his sense of it grows whole and grand. He is a worshipper only in the sense that

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in his clarified consciousness of it the Creation is seen to be awesome and mysterious, deserving worship:

One granite ridge
A tree, would be enough
Or even a rock, a small creek,
A bark shred in a pool.
Hill beyond hill, folded and twisted
Tough trees crammed
In thin stone fractures
A huge moon on it all, is too much.
The mind wanders. A million
Summers, night air still and the rocks
Warm. Sky over endless mountains.
All the junk that goes with being human
Drops away, hard rock wavers
Even the heavy present seems to fail
This bubble of a heart.
Words and books
Like a small creek off a high ledge
Gone in the dry air.

A clear, attentive mind
Has no meaning but that
Which sees is truly seen.
No one loves rock, yet we are here.
Night chills. A flick
In the moonlight
Slips into Juniper shadow:
Back there unseen
Cold proud eyes
Of Cougar or Coyote
Watch me rise and go.

It is necessary for me to say, ending, that this collection of quotations and comments is not meant to be taken as a definitive statement. Like most things said about poetry by poets, it is personal and somewhat arbitrary. It is an effort to suggest that there is in our poetry an impulse of reverence moving toward the world, toward a new pertinence of speech and a new sense of possibility.

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A. R. AMMONS

Essay on Poetics

Take in a lyric information
totally processed, interpenetrated into
wholeness where

a bit is a bit, a string a string, a
cluster a cluster, everything beefing up
and verging out

for that point in the periphery where
salience bends into curve
and all saliences bend to the same angle of

curve and curve becomes curve, one curve, the whole curve:
that is information actual
at every point

but taking on itself at every point
the emanation of curvature, of meaning, all
the way into the high

recognition of wholeness, that synthesis,
feeling, aroused, controlled, and released:
but then find the wholeness

unbelievable because it permits
another wholeness,
another lyric, the same in structure,

in mechanism of existence, but bearing a different weight,
that is, a different, perhaps contradicting,
bit-nature and assimilation:

wholeness then is a condition of existence,
a one:many mechanism, internally irrelevant to scope,
but from the outside circumscribed into scope:

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I like the order that allows, say, when
a thousand cows are on a thousand acres,
clusters to flow out in single file down a gully,

encirclings of drinkholes, concentrations in a green
bottom, spread-outs, but identifiable, across
a broad rise or scape: I like that just as I

like tracings converging into major paths,
untracings of widening out beyond a clump of
trees or small pass:

those configurations, rendered by aerial photography,
would interest me endlessly
in the precision of their topographical relations:

the interests of cows and the possibilities of
the landscape could be read (not a single actual cow)
there well: and nothing be as a consequence known and

yet everything in a sense known, the widest paths
the controlling symbols, with lesser resemblances of
motion: after a while I could account for the motions of

the whole herd and make interesting statements:
for example, with experience, I bet I could tell
from the wear under a copse

whether a lot of hot sunny days in a year
or windy days come: I could tell something obvious already
from the copse whether it constitutes a meaningful

windbreak in a cold wind, sand or snow storm, and then
that, though obvious, would tell about cows:
I'll bet in warm climates with heavy, maybe daily, rains

there'd be little wear under trees, for the cows
would enjoy being out in the showers:
anyway, there's a time when loose speech has to give in,

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come up to the corral, run through the planked alleys,
accept the brand, the medication, surrender to the
identity of age, sex, weight, and bear its relationship

to the market: there's no market for most speech, specially
good, and none for loose: that's why I don't care
how far I wander off;

I wouldn't care if I found a whole year gone by and myself
not called for: the way I think is
I think what I see: the designs are there: I use

words to draw them out—also because I can't
draw at all: I don't think: I see: and I see
the motions of cowpaths

over a non-existent, thousand-acre ranch: (times
frequently recur in good scope in which I don't see):
stop on any word and language gives way:

the blades of reason, unlightened by motion, sink in,
melting through, and reality's cold murky waters
accept the failure: for language heightens by dismissing reality,

the sheet of ice a salience controlling, like a symbol,
level of abstraction, that has a hold on reality and suppresses
it, though formed from it and supported by it:

motion and artificiality (the impositional remove from reality)
sustain language: nevertheless, language must
not violate the bit, event, percept,

fact—the concrete—otherwise the separation that means
the death of language shows: when that happens abandonment
is the only terrible health and a return to bits, re-trials

of lofty configurations: if the organism of the ranch
alters, weeds will grow in old paths and the new waterhole
exist in a new weaving: means, reaching identity too

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soon, exclude: mannerism is more suitable to the lyric
than to larger affairs because both lyric and manneristic style
are slight completions: dropping back from the completion

to a linear mode can be more engrossing: for example, the
dactyllic hexameter can grind on, entangling, ingesting bits,
threads, strings, lesser saliences into considerable scope: or

iambic pentameter, especially unrhymed, is an infinitely various
ployable means: one must be ever in search of the rapier that
holds the world on guard: but the sparrow trap traps a sparrow:

(disquisition is sesquipedalian pedestrianism, tidying up
the loose bits, but altogether missing the import of the impetus):
a center's absolute, if relative: but every point in spacetimematter's

a center: reality is abob with centers: indeed, there is
nothing but centers: centers of galaxies, systems, planets, asteroids,
moons, drifts, atoms, electrons: and the center, as of the

earth, where all turns and pressures meet, is inexpressibly light,
still, and empty: the spruce trees at this moment deeply
sway with snow and snow is falling, the temperature below

freezing: the muffled morning offered no relief: now, though,
just after noon, small gusts twist the branches; not
the heavy lower branches, too long in their holding, and too wide,

to respond: but twist the lighter, higher branches so they drop
falls of snow and those falls, light, their efficacy increased
by falling, strike the lower, heavier loads, dislodging airy

avalanches, sketchy with event but releasing: it seems to me
a possibility of unceasing magnitude that these structures
permit these eventualities: small winds with small branches can

loosen heavy postures: a miraculous increase, as if heat could
go uphill: but occurring within a larger frame, at great potential
expense: (but energy displacements, switches, translations are

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too considerable for calculation in the smallest sector): still,
though the whole may be running down, spills
here and there are overspills, radiances: the lyric, then,

has never been found out because at the center it, too, is
empty, still, silent: this is a point of provisional
summation: hence, the *then's, still's,* and *but's:*

a point of entangling toward the intertwining of a core, a core
involving every thread: so far, we have ranch, snowsquall,
avalanche, ice skates, wind, etc.: but the main confluence

is one:many which all this essay is about: I get lost for fun,
because there's no chance of getting lost: I am seeking the
mechanisms physical, physiological, epistemological, electrical,

chemical, esthetic, social, religious by which many, kept
discrete as many, expresses itself into the
manageable rafters of salience, lofts to comprehension, breaks

out in hard, highly informed suasions, the "gathering
in the sky" so to speak, the trove of mind, tested
experience, the only place there is to stay, where the saints

are known to share accord and wine, and magical humor floats
upon the ambient sorrow: much is nearly stable there,
residencies perpetual, more than less, where gold is utterly

superfluous and paves the superfluous streets, where phenomena
lose their drift to the honey of eternity: the holy bundle of
the elements of civilization, the Sumerians said: the place

where change is mere disguise, where whatever turns turns
in itself: there is no reason for confusion: that is
what this is about: it's simple and impossibly difficult,

simple by grandeur, impossible by what all must answer there:
enterprise is our American motif, riding horseback between
the obscure beginning and the unformulated conclusion, thinking

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grace that show of riding, the expertise, performance, the intricacy
of dealing: to be about something: history can assign and glean,
furnish sources and ends, give grades: that is the

enterprise of history, always best when best accomplished: since
the one thing we learn from history is that we do not learn:
enterprise then's the American salience, rainbow arch,

colossus: but the aristoi are beauty, wealth, birth, genius &
virtue who should be gouvernors: enterprise somewhat, though
not necessarily, inconsistent with those, we lack governors:

the definition of definition goes two ways, opposing:
one direction cuts away, eliminating from relevance, limits
into true: take the word *true:* it goes back through ME.

treue, trewe to AS. *treowe, trywe* to a kinship with G. *treu*
and on to IE. *derew,* meaning tree, in the basic sense of as
firm as a tree: if one could be sure of Indo-European forests

one might add lofty, abundant, straight, strong, majestic:
somewhere then in the essence of *tree* has been found the
essence of *true,* including perhaps the perpendicularity or

verticality of true: but while *tree* clarifies the
mind with certain boundaries, it also recalls clusters
of tree-images, memories of particular

trees, and a sense of a translation (separation) in the mind which
is trying to distil *tree,* a luminous, ideal image-tree, the truest
tree, from the actual clusters of memory: it is necessary

then to turn the essential image of a tree into the truest
rational wordage: truth, then, might be "conformity
with the facts": but then we know that facts have truth

when touched, given configuration by transforming,
informing fiction: is this unnecessarily
puzzling: all I mean to suggest is that the reality under

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words (and images) is too multiple for rational assessment and
that language moves by sailing over: the
other way definition has is to accept the multiplicity of

synthesis: of course, synthesis is at work in certain levels of
analysis, but I mean by synthesis the primary intent: look
at it this way: I am experiencing at the moment several

clusters of entanglement: if I took a single thread from a
single cluster, viewed it, explained it, presented it, would
I not be violating my reality into artificial clarity and my

bundles into artificial linearity: but if I broached, as I seem
to be doing, too many clusters, would I not be violating this
typewriter's mode into nonsense: hew a middle way, the voice

replied, which is what I'm doing the best I can,
that is to say, with too many linking verbs: the grandest
clustering of aggregates permits the finest definition: so out

of that bind, I proceed a little way into similarity and
withdraw a bit into differentiae: unfortunately, man cannot
do better though it might be better done: if I begin with

the picture of a lyre, translate it into a thousand words,
do I have a lyric: what is a lyre-piece: a brief and single
cry: the quickest means to a still point in motion:

three quatrains rhyming alternate lines: let me see if I can
write a poem to help heave the point:

At Once

Plumage resembles foliage
for camouflage often
and so well at times it's difficult

to know whether nature means
resembler or resembled:
obviously among things is

included the preservation of

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distinction in a seeming oneness:
I say it not just

because I often have: maximum
diversity with maximum unity
prevents hollow easiness.

poetry, even in its
self-rationale aims two ways at once, polar ways sometimes

to heighten the crisis and pleasure of the reconciliation:
getting back to *tree* and *true*, though, I was thinking last
June, so multiple and dense is the reality of a tree, that I

ought to do a booklength piece on the elm in the backyard here:
I wish I had done it now because it could stand for truth, too:
I did do a sketch one day which might suggest the point:

I guess it's a bit airy to get mixed up with
an elm tree on anything
like a permanent basis: but I've had it
worse before—talking stones and bushes—and may
get it worse again: but in this one
the elm doesn't talk: it's just an object, albeit
hard to fix:
unfixed, constantly
influenced and influencing, still it hardens and enters
the ground at a fairly reliable point:
especially since it's its
general unalterability that I need to define and stress
I ought to know its longitude and latitude,
so I could keep checking them out: after all, the ground
drifts:
and rises: and maybe rises slanting—that would be
difficult to keep track of, the angle
could be progressive or swaying or
seasonal, underground rain
& "floating" a factor: in hilly country
the underground mantle, the

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"float" bedrock is in, may be highly variable and variable
in effect:
I ought to know the altitude, then, from some fixed point;
I assume the fixed point would have to be
  the core center of the planet, though I'm perfectly
prepared to admit the core's involved
  in a slow—perhaps universal—slosh that would alter the
  center's position
  in terms of some other set of references I do not
  think I will at the moment entertain
  since to do so invites an outward, expanding
reticulation
too much to deal precisely with:

true, I really ought to know where the tree is: but I know
it's in my backyard:
I've never found it anywhere else and am willing to accept
    the precision of broadness: with over-precision
things tend to fade: but since I do need stability and want
to make the tree stand for that (among other things)
it seems to me I ought to be willing to learn enough about
theory and instrument
to take sights for a few days or weeks and see if anything
roundly agreeable could be winnowed out: that
ought to include altimeters (several of them, to average
instrumental variation), core theory and gravity waves:
but I'm convinced I'm too awkward
and too set in some ways
to take all that on: if I am to celebrate multiplicity,
unity, and such
I'll be obliged to free myself by accepting certain
limitations:

    I am just going to take it for granted
    that the tree is in the backyard:
it's necessary to be quiet in the hands of the marvelous:

I am impressed with the gradualism of sway,
of growth's sway: the bottom limb that John's

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swing's on and that's largely horizontal
has gradually outward toward the tip
demonstrated the widening of the leaves
by
sinking: the rate of sinking, which is the rate of
growth, has been
within the variations of night and day, rain and shine,
broadly constant
and the branch's adjustment to that growth
of a similar order: nevertheless, the
wind has lifted, a respiratory floating, the branch
as if all the leaves had breathed in, many a
time
and let it fall
and rain and dew have often lowered it below its depth—
birds have lighted bringing
varying degrees of alteration to the figurings, sharp
distortions, for example, to the
twigs, slow dips to secondary branches, perhaps no
noticeable effect at the branch root:
I should go out and measure the diameters of
the branch, secondary branches, small limbs, and twigs
and their extensions from base
and devise a mathematics
to predict the changes of located average birds: it
would give me plenty to do for weeks
and save me from the rigors of many heights:
or scoot me to them: conceiving a fact stalls the
imagination to its most threatening dimension:

I think now of growth at the edges of the leaves as the
reverse of the elmworm's forage:

the elmworm, I haven't seen any this year—one spring
there were millions—is as to weight an interesting
speculation:
as he eats the leaf lessens but of course the weight is
added to himself, so on a quick scale the
transformation is one to one:

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but the worm makes waste, the efficiency of his mechanisms
average and wasteful: in the long range, then,
worms lighten trees and let in light: but that's
another problem: could it be maintained that
the worm lets in light enough
to increase growth equal to his destruction:
  it's a good point, a true variable, but surely
any sudden defoliation by a plague of worms
would be harmful: a re-entry of winter (though possibly
with all of winter's possibility): time and number figure
mysteriously here:

one should be patient and note large results,
reserve some time for broad awareness:

broad awareness is the gift of settled minds: or of
minds hurt high from painful immediacy: it eliminates
and jettisons
sensory contact with too much accident and event—total
  dependencies at the edge: the man
fully aware,
unable to separate out certain large motions, probably
couldn't move: it's better, I think, to be
broadly and emptily aware so as more efficiently
to negotiate the noons of recurrence:

(I have come lately to honor gentleness so:
it's because
of my engagement with
tiny sets and systems of energy, nucleations and constructs,
that I'm unnerved with the slight and needful
  of consideration: part of consideration's
slightness: it approaches and stands off peripherally
quiet and patient should a gesture
be all that's right
      but of course it will on invitation tend:
      it never blunts or overwhelms with aid
      or transforms in order to be received):
while shade increases equally with surface area of leaf

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the net result's
a considerable variance:
leaves inter-shade

but the result on the ground's non-accumulative:

in May last year, a month before the above sketch, I did another briefer thing:

elm seed, maple
seed shower
loose when the wind
stirs, a spring-wind harvesting
(when so many things
have to be picked—take strawberries,
stooped to and crawled
along before, or the finger-bluing
of blueberries):
everything so
gentle and well
done: I sit down not to flaw
the ambience:

the elm seed's winged all round
and exists, a sheathed
swelling, in the center: it
can flutter,
spin,
or, its axis just right, slice
with a draft or cut through one:
(it doesn't go very far but it can
get out of the shade):

then there's the maple seed's oar-wing:
it spins too
(simply, on an ordinary day)
but in a gust can glide broadside:

(dandelion seeds in a head are

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noted for their ability to become detached
though attached:
with a tiny splint-break
the wind can have a bluster of them:
the coming fine of an intimation):

those are facts, one-sided extensions:
since the wind's indifferent
the seeds take pains to
make a difference:
praise god for the empty and undesigned:

hampered by being ungreat poetry, incapable of carrying quick conviction into imagination's locked clarity,

nevertheless these pieces establish the point
that a book might be written on the interpenetrations of
appearance of an elm tree, especially when the seasons could be

brought in, the fluff cresting snow limbs, the stars and the
influence of starlight on growth or stunting—I have no
idea how such distance affects leaves—the general surround, as of

wind, rain, air pollution, bird shade, squirrel nest: books
by the hundred have already been written on cytology, the
study of cells, and in an elm tree there are twelve quintillion cells,

especially in the summer foliage, and more takes place by way
of event, disposition and such in a single cell than any computer
we now have could keep registration of, given the means of deriving

the information: but if I say books could be written about a single
tree I mean to say only that truth is difficult, even when
noncontradicting; that is, the mere massive pile-up of information

is recalcitrant to higher assimilations without great loss of
concretion, without wide application of averaging: things are
reduced into knowledge: and truth, as some kind of lofty reification,

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is so great a reduction it is vanished through by spirit only, a
parallelogram, square or beam of light, or perhaps a more casual
emanation or glow: when so much intellectual energy seems to be

coming to nothing, the mind searches its culture clutch for mean-
ingful
or recurrent objects, finds say a crown or flag or apple or tree or
beaver and invests its charge in that concretion, that focus: then

the symbol carries exactly the syrup of many distillations and
hard endurance, soft inquiry and turning: the symbol apple and
the real apple are different apples, though resembled: "no ideas
but in

things" can then be read into alternatives—"no things but in
ideas,"
"no ideas but in ideas," and "no things but in things": one thing
always to keep in mind is that there are a number of possibilities:

whatever sways forward implies a backward sway and the mind
must
either go all the way around and come back or it must be prepared
to fall back and deal with the lost sway, the pressure for dealing

increasing constantly with forwardness: it's surprising to me
that my image of the orders of greatness comes in terms of descent:
I would call the lyric high and hard, a rocky loft, the slow,

snowline melt of individual crystalline drops, three or four to
the lyric: requires precision and nerve, is almost always badly
accomplished, but when not mean, minor: then there is the rush,

rattle, and flash of brooks, pyrotechnics that turn water white:
poetry is magical there, full of verbal surprise and dashed
astonishment: then, farther down, the broad dealing, the smooth

fullness of the slow, wide river: there starts the show of genius,
in motion, massive beyond the need of disturbing surprise, but,
still,

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channeled by means—the land's—other than its own: genius, and

the greatest poetry, is the sea, settled, contained before the first
current stirs but implying in its every motion adjustments
throughout the measure: one recognizes an ocean even from a
dune and

the very first actions of contact with an ocean say ocean over and
over: read a few lines along the periphery of any of the truly
great and the knowledge delineates an open shore:

what is to be gained from the immortal person except the experi-
ence
of ocean: take any line as skiff, break the breakers, and go out
into the landless, orientationless, but perfectly contained, try

the suasions, brief dips and rises, and the general circulations,
the wind, the abundant reductions, stars, and the experience is
obtained: but rivers, brooks, and trickles have their uses and

special joys and achieve, in their identities, difficult absoluteness:
but will you say, what of the content—why they are all made of
water:
but will you, because of the confusion, bring me front center as

a mere mist or vapor: charity is greater than poetry: enter it,
in consideration of my need and weakness: I find I am able to say
only what is in my head: a heady constraint: and to say it only

as well as I can: inventory my infirmities and substitute
your love for them, and let us hold on to one another and
move right away from petulant despair: to broach a summary, I

would say the problem is scientific—how is reality to be
rendered: how is 4,444 to be made 444 and 44 and 4 and 1: I
have the shaky feeling I've just said something I don't trust:

poems are arresting in two ways: they attract attention with
glistery astonishment and they hold it: stasis: they gather and
stay: the progression is from sound and motion to silence and

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rest: for example, I can sit in this room, close my eyes, and
reproduce the whole valley landscape, still: I can see the
southern end of Lake Cayuga, I can see Stewart Park, the high-
ways,

the breaking out and squaring up of Ithaca, I can see the hill-
ridges
rising from the Lake, trees, outcroppings of rocks, falls, ducks
and gulls, the little zoo, the bridges: I can feel my eyesight

traveling around a held environment: I am conscious that the
landscape is fixed at the same time that I can move around in it:
a poem is the same way: once it is thoroughly known, it contains

its motion and can be reproduced whole, all its shapeliness intact,
to the mind at the same time the mind can travel around in it and
know its sound and motion: nothing defined can

be still: the verbal moves, depends there, or sinks into unfocused
irreality: ah, but when the mind is brought to silence, the
non-verbal, and the still, it's whole again to see how motion goes:

the left nest in the shrub has built up a foothigh cone of snow
this morning and four sparrows sitting in the quince bush are
the only unaugmented things around: eight more inches are piling

on to ten we had and every evergreen has found the way it would
lean in a burden, split its green periphery and divide: John's
old tractor on the lawn only shows its steering wheel: the

snowplow's been by and blocked the driveway: it's December 26:
yesterday was Christmas: I got a pair of water-resistant gloves
with a removable woolen lining: I got Phyllis three charms for

the bracelet I bought her in Rome: John got a snowsled, a beauti-
ful
wooden train set, Lincoln logs, toggles, and several things
operated by non-included batteries: this morning he has no fever:

he's had tonsillitis this is the fifth day with fevers to 103 and

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104: I've felt built over a jerking machine, not quite turned on
or off: this morning John put on his new cowboy hat (he's nearly

four) and I put on his crash helmet, and we searched all the dark
corners and closets for thieves and robbers: we jailed a couple:
one teddy bear and one stuffed, long-legged leprechaun: everyone

will find here a detail that is a key to a set of memories:
strings of nucleations please me more than representative details:
(not that the detail is representative—only that it is a detail

of numerical dominance in recurrence):

subatomic particle
atom
molecule
cell
tissue
organ
organ system
organism
species
community
living world

or

observation
problem
hypothesis
experiment
theory
natural law:

the swarm at the
subatomic level may be so complex and surprising that it puts
quasars, pulsars and other matters to shame: I don't know:

and "living world" on the other hand may be so scanty in its
information as to be virtually of no account: nevertheless,
a drift is expressed in the progressions up or down—organization,

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the degree of: the control into integration (integrated action)
of the increasingly multiple: the human organism, composed of
billions of cells formed into many specializations and subordinations,

can deliver its total lust to the rarification of sight of the
beloved: for example: and many other high levels of symmetry,
unification, and concerted thrust: poems, of human make, are

body images, organisms of this human organism: if that isn't
so I will be terribly disappointed: it sounds as if it ought to
be right: consonants, vowels, idioms, phrases, clauses (tissues),

sentences (organs), verses (organ systems), poems (living worlds):
I react to such stuff with a burst of assent resembling for all
I can tell valuable feeling: rubbing a girl also, of course,

produces feeling, I would be the last to deny it, but it may be
precisely the organisation-principle in girls that one, rubbing,
is pleasured by: if, as I believe, we are not only ourselves—i.e.,

the history of our organism—but also every process that went into
our making, then, in the light of our present ignorance, we may
safely leave much potentiality to undisclosed possibility: mush,

mush, how friendly: that's what I think, I'll tell you in a nutshell: and in poems, the insubstantial processes of becoming
form inscrutable parts of the living thing: and then how the

orders of the poem build up and cooperate into the pure heat of
sight and insight, trembling and terror: it makes me gasp aghast:
no wonder we pedants talk about history, influence, meaning

in poems: that's peripheral enough to prevent the commission of
larger error, and safe error is a pedantic preference well-known,
widely footnoted, and amply rewarded: I believe in fun:

"superior amusement" is a little shitty: fun is nice: it's what
our society is built on: fun in the enterprise: I believe in it:

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I have no faith in the scoffers: they are party-poopers who are

afraid they ought to believe in history or logical positivism and
don't have any real desire to do so: they are scarcely worth a
haircut: organisms, I can tell you, build up under the thrust to

joy and nothing else can lift them out of the miry circumstance:
and poems are pure joy, no matter how deep they sway with grief:
the way to joy is integration's delivery of the complete lode:

the flow broken, coinless, I, the third morning of Ithaca's most
historical snowbind, try to go on, difficult, difficult, the hedges
split open, showing inside the vacancy and naked, bony limbs: snow

up past the garage door handle, new snow still falling, and high
gusts roaring through the cold: supplies low or gone: and the stores
closed: that last appeals too much in the wrong sort: like any

scholar, I should, at this point to uncripple the condition, quote,
but first, I must, like a scholar, clear the field: I choose Ruskin
to say what thousands have said: "Art is neither to be achieved by

effort of thinking, nor explained by accuracy of speaking": well,
still, Ruskin, it cannot be achieved without effort, and one level
of accuracy may be preferred to another: this must be a point of

clustering because I feel a lot of little things jostling
to get in where they can be said: for example, I just walked
a mile to the store, blowing snow, I was in to my ass practically

getting out to the plowed road: I got hotdogs, bacon, bread (out of
eggs), coffee: and on the way back, the wind in my face and snow
drifted ten feet high along one curve that has an open field behind

it, I passed two straggly young girls laughing, dogs barking after

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them, and one carrying her jacket, big boobs jouncing in her short-
sleeved sweater: I was barking inside myself a little, rosy ideas

in the blinding snowlight: one guy I passed said "beautiful weather"—
the kind of thing one, after four days penned up, is grateful to
say and hear: I quote now to enrich the mix, to improve my stew from

the refrigerator of timeless ingredients:

> "A large number of the inhabitants of a mud flat will be worms. It is hard to develop enthusiasm for worms, but it took nature more than a billion years to develop a good worm—meaning one that has specialized organs for digestion, respiration, circulation of the blood, and excretion of wastes. All organisms perform these functions—amoebas, flagellates, bacteria or even filterable viruses; but the worms—at least the higher worms—do all these things better. They also developed segmentation or reduplication of parts, permitting increase in size with completely coordinated function. Contemporary architects call this modular construction. It is found in man in the spinal column, in the segmental arrangement of spinal nerves, and in some other features that are especially prominent during embryonic development."
>
> [*The Sea* by Robert C. Miller. Random House. New York, 1966. p. 165.]
>
> "We may sum up. Carbohydrates, fats, proteins, nucleic acids, and their various derivatives, together with water and other inorganic materials, plus numerous additional compounds found specifically in particular types of living matter—these are the molecular bricks out of which living matter is made. To be sure, a mere random pile of such bricks does not make a living structure, any more than a mere pile of real bricks makes a house. First and foremost, if the whole is to be living, the molecular components must be organized into a

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specific variety of larger microscopic bodies; and these in turn, into actual appropriately structured cells."

[*The Science of Botany* by Paul B. Weisz and Melvin S. Fuller. McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc. 1962. p. 48.]

poems are verbal
symbols for these organizations: they imprint upon the mind
examples of integration in which the energy flows with maximum

effect and economy between the high levels of oneness and the
numerous subordinations and divisions of diversity: it is simply
good to have the mind exposed to and reflected by such examples:

it firms the mind, organizes its energy, and lets the controlled
flows occur: that is simple good in itself: I can't stress that
enough: it is not good for something else—although of course

it is good for infinite things else: so my point is that the poem
is the symbolical representation of the ideal organization, whether
the cell, the body politic, the business, the religious

group, the university, computer, or whatever: I used to wonder
why, when they are so little met and understood, poems are
taught
in schools: they are taught because they are convenient examples

of the supreme functioning of one and many in an organization of
cooperation and subordination: young minds, if they are to
"take
their place in society" need to learn patience—that oneness is

not useful when easily derived, that manyness is not truthful when
thinly selective—assent, that the part can, while insisting on
its own identity, contribute to the whole, that the whole can

sustain and give meaning to the part: and when these things
are beautifully—that is, well—done, pleasure is a bonus
truth-functioning allows: that is why art is valuable: it is

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extremely valuable: also, in its changing, it pictures how
organizations can change, incorporate innovation, deal with accidence
and surprise, and maintain their purpose—increasing the means and

assuring the probability of survival: the point of change, though,
brings me to a consideration of the adequacy of the transcendental
vegetative analogy: the analogy is so appealing, so swept with

conviction, that I hardly ever have the strength to question it:
I've often said that a poem in becoming generates the laws of its
own becoming: that certainly sounds like a tree, growing up with

no purpose but to become itself (regardless of the fact that many
are constantly trying to turn it into lumber): but actually, a tree
is a print-out: the tree becomes exactly what the locked genetic

code has pre-ordained—allowing, of course, for variables of weather,
soil, etc.: so that the idea that some organic becoming is
realizing itself in the vegetative kingdom is only partially

adequate: real change occurs along the chromosomes, a risky business
apparently based on accidence, chance, unforseeable distortion:
the proportion of harmful to potentially favorable mutations is

something like 50,000 to 1: how marvelous that the possibility of
favorable change is a flimsy margin in overwhelming, statistically,
destruction and ruin: that is the way nature pours it on: once it

has arrived at a favorable organization—a white oak, for example—
it does not allow haphazard change to riddle it—no, it protects the
species by the death of thousands of its individuals: but lets the

species buy by the hazard of its individuals the capacity to adjust,

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should adjustment be indicated or allowed: that is terrifying and
pleasing: a genetic cull myself, I have the right to both

emotions: along the periphery of integrations, then, is an exposure
to demons, thralls, witcheries, the maelstrom black of
possibility, costly, chancy, lethal, open: so I am not so much

arguing with the organic school as shifting true organismus from
the already organized to the bleak periphery of possibility,
an area transcendental only by its bottomless entropy: a word on
the

art/nature thing: art is the conscious preparation for the un-
conscious
event: to the extent that it is possible—a fining up of the attention
and filling out of the means: art is the craft and lore of preparing

the soil for seed: no enmity: complementary: is any yeoman
dumb enough to think that by much cultivation of the fields
wheat
will sprout: or that saying words over the barren, the seedless,

will make potatoes: son of a gun's been keeping a bag of seed-wheat
in the barn all winter, has sorted out good potatoes and knows
how
to cut their eyes out: it's hard to say whether the distinguishers

or the resemblancers are sillier: they work with noumena every
day, but speak of the invisible to them and they laugh with
silver modernity: well, as I said, we are more certain that we

are about than what we are about: here is something I have always
wanted to quote:

> "Around the mouths of rivers, where the fresh waters of the land meet the salt waters of the sea, live some of the world's densest populations. This food-rich borderland harbors immense numbers and varieties of living creatures—protozoans, worms, snails, shrimp, clams, oysters and on up through the vertebrate fishes. Life in an estuary may be rich, but it is also

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almost inconceivably dangerous. The temperature of its shallow waters runs the scale from freezing to over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Twice each day the ebb and flow of the tides drastically alter the conditions of life, sometimes stranding whole populations to die a high-and-dry or freezing death. Winds, floods, and tidal currents often bury the stationary bottom animals under suffocating slides of sand or silt. But the greatest hazard of all is alien water—water that is too fresh or too salty. Aquatic animals are sensitive to the salt content of their water environment. A sudden rain-fed flood of fresh water from a river mouth can be catastrophic to populations dwelling in the estuary."

["The Life of an Estuary" by Robert M. Ingle. *Scientific American*. May 1954.]

isn't that beautiful: it has bearing in many ways on my argument: it provided me years ago with ideas on

risks and possibilities: well, my essay is finished: I thank it with all my heart for helping me to get through this snowstorm: having a project is useful especially during natural suspensions.

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GARY SNYDER

O

O
Mistress of Bobcats
Lady of Sagebrush
        why do you fool me?
        showing me
You
        in a thousand shapes.
breasts, eyes, flanks, toes,
arches,
lifts of the arm,
soft of the back of the knees,

        sweets and salts of
        lips and gulfs,
        halls of deep flesh song—

Why do you trick me
            Queen of Taste?

        whose real beauty

            is One.

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W. S. MERWIN

Under the Migrants

Winter is almost upon us
and in the south there is a battle

every day silent thunder from there
light going up like a shout

each of us is alone
when we close our eyes
the roads are strips of death

when we open our eyes the bandages
go on unwinding
back into the north the whiteness

on the avenues trucks rumble southward
to be seen no more

can you hear yourself we cannot

flocks of single hands are all flying
southward

from us

and the clocks all night all day
point that way

End of Summer

High above us a chain of white buckets
full of old light going home

now even the things that we do
reach us after long journeys
and we have changed

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The Clear Skies

The clouds that touch us out of clear skies

they are eyes that we lost
long ago on the mountain
and lose
every day on the dark mountain
under clear skies

and because we lose them we say they are old
because they are blind we say
that they cannot find us
that their cloudy gaze
cannot touch us
on our mountain

because we have lost whoever
they are calling
we say that they are not calling
us

The Distances

When you think of the distances
you recall
that we are immortal

you think of them setting out from us
all of them setting out
from us
and none dies and none is forgotten

and all over the world there are dams
lying on their backs
thinking of the sea

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DOROTHY ROBERTS

Fall

Night and the apple found being large and generous
a full-blown one, a fragrant, fallen with the proverbial thud
and no wind in the late evening. Christ does no better than this.

Broken from the tree bough and whacking its way down
in the rustle of many branches . . . . darkness embraces
in the low place beneath where the chill grass is.

The fall of the freed apple the earth stops soundly
as moon fallen cold to the wet grass, the shadow,
to the cold drenched grass and the solid shadow,
and the thud says Land, land the arrival.

Shadow

Rock rests inertly in form worn by weather,
but we going out are disturbed by cold, hush and dark,
setting down the feet with a crisp sound
and the shadow rising high on the wall of bush
that swallows up and closes and in the black hush
twigs are broken and a bird beats up from its rest.

Coming that forcibly, an alien current
rouses the usual round so that it is felt disturbed
as by the predatory . . . . though we can't be that
we take that form on the wall of the brush
and the bird flies from harm and even the apple picked
from the chill grass is removed
is no longer there, is lost.

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Boat on the Beach

Waiting there for no path, a solid unobtrusive boat
steady enough to be entrusted with the freest kind of morning
and the mist and the whisper of rushes
and the quiet drag down along the sand.

Quiet at the edge of the morning coming up
and the fact of no path telling nothing of what we did
but everything instead in just the boat
as graphic as if it had been sketched.

Here the boat is related to its possibilities and confinements
that lets it be itself and remain so for the next voyage
as for so many earlier, so we can remember
the human past of it in its shape of morning.

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JOHN D. ROSENBERG

Varieties of Infernal Experience

THE CITY IS AT ONCE AN ORGANISM AND AN IDEA. As an organism, it flourishes and fades, presenting a different aspect to the beholder at each moment in its history. As an idea, the city has haunted the human imagination with a fixity equalled perhaps only by the idea of time or of God. The new industrial towns of the nineteenth century were probably as unlike the early cities of the Fertile Crescent as hell is from heaven, yet we still apprehend and describe cities in archetypal patterns that predate ancient Babylon or Tyre. Even the literature of the modern city, like modern man himself, is haunted by recollections of the gods and by the ghosts of the fallen cities they once founded.

The earliest cities were believed to be sacred in origin and to have come into being as the terrestrial counterpart of a celestial model. The golden city that the Evangelist sees at the end of the Apocalypse might stand as the type of all urban foundations: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (21:2). The vision still dazzles, but the mode of thought is essentially primitive. For early man recognized as real only those places or events which, by analogy, he could fit into a divine prototype.[1] Like the New Jerusalem, the ancient cities of Egypt and Babylon, of India and the Orient, came down from God out of the heavens and were ruled by His surrogates on earth—kings and priests. To found a city was to create a cosmos out of chaos, to duplicate in miniature the act of Creation itself. Hence it is that Troy was built to the music of Apollo's lyre and that the Egyptian god Ptah, the generative force of the world, was described as he who "founded cities" and "put the gods in their shrines." The medieval city, dominated by the cathedral enshrining its patron saint, retains the idea of the city as sacred center, an *axis mundi* where heaven, earth, and hell intersect.[2]

[1] See Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return,* trans. Willard R. Trask (New York, 1954), p. 10.

[2] See Eliade, Chapter I, *passim;* also, Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (New York, 1961), pp. 31, 35, 48, 69, 87; Sigfried Giedion, *The Eternal Present: The Beginnings of Architecture* (New York, 1963), p. 217.

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From the perspective of the secularized modern city and its suburban extensions, it is virtually impossible to appreciate the supernatural aura associated with cities until recent times. Yet it was credible to an earlier period that the gods themselves fought over the fate of Troy and the founding of Rome. The destiny of Jerusalem lay in the hands of Jehovah himself, and when He decreed its fall and the Israelites became captives in Babylon, their survival depended on remembering their sacred city in a strange land. No subject seems more to have moved the ancient imagination than the fate of a great city. Although Troy falls in our minds only, Homer merely anticipating but never describing its collapse, that doom weighs more heavily upon the poem than the sum of its countless individual deaths. As Simone Weil writes, the *Iliad* "lies under the shadow of the greatest calamity the human race can experience—the destruction of a city."[3] Second only to language as the producer, transmitter, and preserver of human culture, the city in its continuity defies individual mortality and, perhaps in so doing, struck the ancient mind as necessarily divine, an embodiment on earth of an immortal order.

If the *Iliad* is burdened with the fall of Troy, the *Aeneid* labors under the equal weight of its second founding as Rome. In the most pictorial scene in the entire epic, Aeneas, fleeing through the burning streets of Troy and followed by his wife, bears his aged father on his back and holds his son by the hand, carrying the city's past upon his shoulders and guiding its future beside him. Virgil's vignette of this elemental human family in flight is completed by Aeneas' putting on the tawny pelt of a lion, emblematic of man's reversion to the semi-savage with the loss of his city. Yet, however primitive, they remain a *holy* family, for Aeneas takes with him the sacred relics of the city and the household gods. Only with these in hand can he hope for an answer to his prayer:

> Grant us a walled home of our own, a place for tired men,
> A future, and a continuing city! Ensure for us few,
> Left by the Greeks and relentless Achilles, a second Troy!
> (III, 85-87, trans. C. Day-Lewis)

The earliest cities descended out of the heavens from God; by

[3] "The *Iliad* or the Poem of Force," in *The Proper Study*, ed. Quentin Anderson and Joseph A. Mazzeo (New York, 1962), p. 25.

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a curious reverse movement, as the great earthly cities fell into captivity or decay, they were projected back into the heavens in idealized versions reminiscent of their origins. Rome had resisted invasion for nearly a thousand years when it was finally sacked by Alaric in 410; out of its earthly ashes arose St. Augustine's *City of God*. The New Jerusalem became an obsessive motif with the Hebrew prophets and psalmists upon the destruction of the old, and Plato wrote his ideal *Republic* after he had seen Athens surrender her empire to Sparta, Socrates martyred, and the city fall prey to tyrants and demagogues. Plato's attitude toward the earthly city is essentially that of St. Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (13:14). At the close of the ninth book of the *Republic*, Socrates remarks that the pattern of his ideal commonwealth is "set up in the heavens for one who desires to see it and, seeing it, to found one in himself. But whether it exists anywhere or ever will exist is no matter; for this is the only commonwealth in whose politics he can ever take part." Plato's utopia, like St. Augustine's, is a profoundly religious vision of perfection grounded in the experience of despair. In this regard, the *Republic* differs from the tradition of secular utopias, such as Bacon's *New Atlantis* or William Morris' *News from Nowhere*, which are patterned on no celestial archetype, deny original sin, and suppose that man unaided can build his own earthly paradise. It is a lugubrious comment on our own urban experience that the utopian tradition has given way to the inverted utopias of Aldous Huxley and Orwell, secular versions of Dante's Hell.[4]

The city as New Jerusalem is only a few paces removed in the human imagination from the city as Inferno—no further, indeed, than the thin sculptural line separating the hosts of the saved from the damned in a Romanesque tympanum. Ptah may have installed the gods in cities, but Milton's lewd Belial walks their darkened streets. And Mulciber, the architect of Milton's Heaven, is the same angel who, fallen, builds Pandemonium. Like all human experience—indeed, like heaven and hell themselves—the city has a peculiarly dual quality; it liberates and confines the human spirit; it enriches and deforms, protects and menaces, draws men together and plunges them into the terrible solitude of the crowd. The literature of the city thus runs to rhetorical extremes, strain-

[4] For the shift from utopia to anti-utopia, see Chad Walsh, *From Utopia to Nightmare* (New York, 1963), p. 14.

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ing to encompass the radical disparities it describes. A mid-nineteenth century observer praised Manchester as "the very symbol of civilization . . . a grand incarnation of progress." Another contemporary peered through the soot and saw "the chimney of the world . . . the entrance to hell realized!"[5]

This ambivalence toward cities is as old as the myth of the Fall. The only art perfected in the primal paradise was gardening, and if on leaving Eden man took with him the curse of mortality, he also took the knowledge of good and evil, and the seeds of civilization. At the end of *Paradise Lost,* Adam and Eve shed a few "natural tears," soon wiped away, for on leaving Eden they found "the World was all before them."

The Epic of Gilgamesh, which predates the earliest written books of the Bible by at least one thousand years, contains an even more ambivalent account of man's evolution from a creature of nature to an inhabitant of cities. Gilgamesh, the semi-divine hero, builds the great ramparts surrounding ancient Uruk and rules with a demonic energy that keeps his people in terror. They pray to the goddess Aruru to create a companion for Gilgamesh who will hold his energies in check. Out of clay she shapes Enkidu, a naked primitive man with matted hair who forages with wild beasts and drinks at their water holes. He and Gilgamesh grapple "like bulls," but each subdues the other and they embrace in friendship. Before their encounter, and prerequisite to it, another embrace had occurred, that between the wild Enkidu and a hired harlot from the city who seduces him. At that moment, Enkidu's animal companions flee from him, and, Samson-like, he loses his strength and swiftness of foot; but "wisdom was [now] in him, and the thoughts of a man were in his heart." The harlot serves him as a kind of nourishing mother, clothing him, teaching him to herd sheep, to eat human food. Finally, she leads him to great Uruk, where men and women dress "in gorgeous robes. . . . He rubbed down the matted hair of his body and anointed himself with oil. Enkidu had become a man."[6]

[5] *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal,* 1858, and General Napier, writing in 1839, both quoted in Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London, 1963), pp. 83, 131.

[6] The Prologue and Chapter I, *The Epic of Gilgamesh,* trans. N. K. Sandars (Baltimore [Penguin Classics], 1960), pp. 59-67. The wild man consorting with animals, like the naked Adam, recalls the primal state when man could "talk" to the animals, not because he knew their language, but because he *was* an animal. From this point of view, the exchange of innocence for wisdom associated with the Fall symbolizes that astounding modification of mind from animal pre-consciousness to human self-consciousness.

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The harlot-tutor personifies the city in its dual role as corrupter and civilizer of man. These dual aspects of the city persist, but sometime in the early nineteenth century the scales began to tip under the pressures of chaotic industrial growth and social dislocation, and the city as a possible paradise became an actual inferno. Of course, there had always been a literature highly critical of the city and quick to point out that, if God built the first garden, Cain founded the first city.[7] In this predominantly Puritan tradition, the city figures as Sodom or, in its Anglicized version, as the Vanity Fair of John Bunyan. But it is in Dr. Johnson's celebrated pronouncement on London that we find the attitude toward the city which predominated through the eighteenth century: "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford." The gentleman retired to the country for refreshment, for choice "views," perhaps for contemplation; but he returned to the city as the rational, agreeable arena of human activity. I want now to concentrate on the transition from Dr. Johnson's London to the menacing, smoking labyrinth of the Victorians.

William Blake comes at the very beginning of the transition, or rather serves as its prophet, for the English countryside he knew was still largely the countryside of Chaucer, and the English town had not yet become "the entrance to hell realized." His *Songs of Innocence* (1789) are set in a natural paradise, and even in the *Songs of Experience* (1794) the city is scarcely glimpsed, with the remarkable exception of "London." The poem foreshadows the moral nightmare the city is to become in Victorian literature. Seen at night by the solitary poet, London serves as the ghostly, darkened frame for the human wrecks he encounters:

> I wander thro' each charter'd street,
> Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
> And mark in every face I meet
> Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

[7] "And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord . . . and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch" (Genesis 4: 16-17).

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In every cry of every Man,
In every Infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry
Every black'ning Church appalls;
And the hapless Soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot's curse
Blasts the new born Infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

The key to the poem is the reiterated "charter'd," which conveys a sense of confined menace, an unnatural constriction intensified by the "mind-forg'd manacles" of the second stanza. For the poem is less about the actual city of London than about the moral condition it induces. The essence of that condition is its total and imprisoning isolation. The Infant, the Soldier, the Sweep, the Harlot are so removed from one another and from the poet that they are never actually *seen* but merely heard as disembodied voices, whose cries or curses imply their presence: the cry of the Sweep indicts the institution of the Church, the curse of the Harlot diseases the institution of marriage. A half-century later Dickens was to trace through the three volumes of *Bleak House* the connection between the diseases of the slums and the moral disease of the entire society that tolerated them. In "London," with phantasmagoric compression, Blake negotiates the same leap of the moral imagination in sixteen lines.

"London" is Blake's vision of the fallen city. The same darkness seems to threaten the countryside in the famous lyric in which he asks,

And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

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The poem was written in the first years of the nineteenth century, when the Satanic Mills began to spread through the Midlands. One cannot, I think, overestimate the impact this blight had upon the English imagination. The desecration of the countryside produced, on the one hand, a magnificent literature of protest, and, on the other, a return to a remembered Eden as the English one was becoming a slag heap.

Seen from this perspective, the Gothic Revival, like Blake's New Jerusalem, represents one of the ageless evocations of the City of God called into being when the earthly city becomes intolerable. In the pre-industrial period, the Revival had been a mere romantic toying with the picturesque, such as Horace Walpole's "Strawberry Hill," a Gothic jest in stone. But in the nineteenth century, the Revival ceased to be a refuge from neoclassicism and became a serious attempt to rebuild Jerusalem "in England's green and pleasant land."

Published in 1836, Augustus Welby Pugin's *Contrasts* was a brilliant piece of visual propaganda for the Revival. Pugin was a convert to Catholicism and worked himself to premature death trying to restore in England the faith and architecture of the Middle Ages. His book consists of a prefatory essay followed by paired plates, each contrasting an example of medieval architecture with its nineteenth-century counterpart. In one, an idealized Catholic town in 1440, we see a broad stream flowing past a city of exquisitely delicate spires and high-gabled houses, behind which rises a rolling, idyllic landscape. In the same town in 1840, the spires have been replaced by smoke-stacks, a gas-works stands on the site of a ruined abbey, and the once open foreground is dominated by a huge, octagonal, windowless jail.

The motif of the two cities reappears in Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1843), in which twelfth-century St. Edmundsbury figures as a medieval Eden, and nineteenth-century Manchester as Hell. The opening chapter of *Past and Present* is written in a style of astonished incredulity, as if the conditions Carlyle reports were the product of a nightmare. He enters a workhouse and sees some fifty able-bodied men sunken in idle torpor. "There was something," he writes, "that reminded me of Dante's Hell in the look of all this; and I rode swiftly away." Carlyle rides, as it were, into the England of Coeur de Lion and St. Edmund's Abbey. Within the cohesive, organic community of Abbot Samson and

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his monks, he finds the antithesis of the atomized society of industrial England, in which the only bond between men is the "cash nexus" and the only liberty the worker has won is the liberty to starve.

Carlyle typifies the shift in the uses to which the nineteenth century put the Middle Ages. For the Romantics, they were an inviting source of nostalgia; for the Victorians, the Middle Ages became an instrument of radical social criticism. Carlyle, Pugin, Ruskin, and Morris all construct their medieval utopias in the spirit of urban planners who would change not merely the architecture of the city but the very quality of its life.

To trace the motif of the two cities in the writings of John Ruskin would require an essay in itself; we will rest with a single, striking example. In 1859 Ruskin lectured in the heart of the industrial Midlands on "Modern Manufacture and Design." The theme of the lecture is that beautiful design can be created only by "people who have beautiful things about them, and leisure to look at them." But in the north of England the environmental preconditions of fine design were becoming impossible. Ruskin illustrates his point by describing what he had just seen of Rochdale on his way to the lecture hall:

> Just outside the town I came upon an old English cottage, or mansion, I hardly know which to call it, set close under the hill, and beside the river, perhaps built somewhere in the Charleses' times, with mullioned windows and a low arched porch; round which, in the little triangular garden, one can imagine the family as they used to sit in old summer times, the ripple of the river heard faintly through the sweetbriar hedge, and the sheep on the far-off wolds shining in the evening sunlight. There, uninhabited for many and many a year, it had been left in unregarded havoc of ruin; the garden-gate still swung loose to its latch; the garden, blighted utterly into a field of ashes, not even a weed taking root there; the roof torn into shapeless rents; the shutters hanging about the windows in rags of rotten wood; before its gate, the stream which had gladdened it now soaking slowly by, black as ebony and thick with curdling scum; the bank above it trodden into unctuous, sooty slime: far in front of it, between it and the old hills, the furnaces of the city foaming forth perpetual plague of sulphurous darkness; the volumes of their storm clouds coiling low over a waste of grassless fields, fenced from each other, not by hedges, but by slabs of square stone, like gravestones, riveted together with iron.[8]

[8] *The Genius of John Ruskin: Selections*, ed. John D. Rosenberg (New York, 1963), p. 224. For the description of Pisa that follows, see pp. 225-26.

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The flourishing life of balanced nature has vanished, and in its place stands, or rather ferments, the modern industrial wasteland, unpeopled, putrifying, Satanic.[9] To this hellscape, Ruskin juxtaposes the prospect of Pisa as it might have appeared to the medieval artist. A glittering river replaces the polluted stream. Instead of furnaces and grassless fields, one sees a dome and bell tower, vine-clad hills, troops of knights, and, rising above them, the "untroubled and sacred sky" which opened upon "a heaven in which every cloud that passed was literally the chariot of an angel, and every ray of its Evening and Morning streamed from the throne of God."

One is moved to remark, along with one of King Arthur's knights on first seeing the distant spires of Camelot,

> Lord, there is no such city anywhere,
> But all a vision.

Camelot is the classic nineteenth-century urban Eden, but its essence, as Tennyson makes clear from the very start of the *Idylls of the King,* lies in its passing. King Arthur clears the wilderness and, for a brief time, made "a realm and reigned." But he founds no continuing city. The vows of his knights are all broken, the marriage bond breaks, and "the realm reels back into the beast." The light that bathes Camelot at Arthur's coming fades into the dim, sinister gloom of his passing. And "the city built to music" dissolves into the aboriginal wasteland of his final battle,

> A land of old upheaven from the abyss
> By fire, to sink into the abyss again;
> Where fragments of forgotten peoples dwelt,
> And the long mountains ended in a coast
> Of ever-shifting sand, and far away
> The phantom circle of a moaning sea.

For a century the *Idylls of the King* has been misread as a kind of

[9] Gerard Manley Hopkins' private terrors of soul have so interested us that we forget that he, too, lived and preached in areas such as Ruskin describes. Cf. this quatrain from "God's Grandeur":

> Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
> And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
> And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell; the soil
> Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

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medieval charade; it is in fact one of the supreme explorations in our literature of the failure of ideality, the chronicle of a paradise lost almost before it has been founded.

Displacement in time was only one nineteenth-century mode of creating the ideal city, and the movement was not always backward to the Middle Ages. William Morris' socialist utopia in *News from Nowhere* (1891) is set in the year 2200, after a bloody class-war is fought in the streets of London. But once the revolution succeeds, Morris lapses from the Marxist realism of the opening and creates a post-industrial England of idyllic villages scattered throughout a garden paradise. His solution to the problem of the modern city is to abolish it and build instead a second Eden. *News from Nowhere* is less compelling as a social program than as testimony to the enduring power of myth. One is reminded of Ruskin's St. George's Guild, a legally chartered corporation whose aim was to found agrarian communities on which there was to be no industry, no railroads, "none wretched but the sick; none idle but the dead." Morris wrote his *News from Nowhere* as an admitted fantasy; Ruskin's venture was totally in earnest, and failed totally.

Of all the ideal cities in nineteenth-century English literature, the most difficult to place is Wordsworth's sonnet "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge." The difficulty is twofold, for Wordsworth is preëminently the poet of nature's superiority to the city, and the London he portrays in the sonnet is in no sense an idealized construction. It is actual London, seen from the roof of a coach just after dawn on September 3, 1802. Wordsworth succeeds in portraying the city in majesty not by displacing it in time but by putting it to sleep and half-assimilating it back to nature:

> Earth hath not anything to show more fair:
> Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
> A sight so touching in its majesty:
> This City now doth, like a garment, wear
> The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
> Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
> Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
> All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
> Never did sun more beautifully steep
> In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;

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Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! The very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

The sense of latent, quiescent power stems less from the tumultuous life which is soon to rise from the houses, crowd the streets, and cloud the "smokeless air" than from the fields which environ the city and the river which glides through its "mighty heart"—more mighty because "still." Neither the city nor the river is ever named; the inhabitants are unseen; the city's only garment is "the beauty of the morning." The very bareness and anonymity is charged with a kind of natural holiness, soon to be dissipated but soon to be renewed.

An attitude toward the city more typical of Wordsworth appears in "Tintern Abbey," where the poet leaves the lonely urban setting in order to recover

that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened. . . .

And for the denouement of the long pastoral idyl "Michael," Wordsworth assumes an automatic, negative response to the city. Michael's son, on whom his whole life hinges, leaves the Lake District and "in the dissolute city" gives himself "to evil courses." No more need be said. The aged Michael dies, and Wordsworth abruptly ends his tale where the modern writer would eagerly pick it up.

A much fuller portrait of the city appears in Book VII of *The Prelude,* subtitled "Residence in London." Wordsworth's stance is that of the solitary spectator, the one fixed point in "a thickening hubbub" of "men and moving things." Minstrels, prostitutes, dancing dogs, a Turk, a "travelling cripple" cut off up to the trunk, form a gallery of grotesques, at once gaudy and secretive. Not yet an Inferno, Wordsworth's London is a kind of cosmopolitan Vanity Fair,

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a phantasma,
Monstrous in colour, shape, sight, sound!

For all its diseased vitality, the city is seen only in bits and pieces of local color that form no overriding metaphoric pattern. It is as though Wordsworth's imagination is locked in an earlier mode, and he cannot bring the city into literary focus, as Dickens was to do a half-century later. He remains the outsider, the "transient visitant," more repelled than fascinated by what he sees.[10] Yet his very alienation from the city made him feel with especial keenness what another outsider, Friedrich Engels, was to observe of London in his *Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844:* the "brutal indifference"[11] and unfeeling isolation of those who rush regardlessly past one another. For Wordsworth, the mystery of London resided not in its vastness or even its variety, but in the self-enclosed solitude of its inhabitants:

How oft, amid those overflowing streets,
Have I gone forward with the crowd, and said
Unto myself, 'The face of every one
That passes by me is a mystery!'

The whole subsequent history of our subject is epitomized in the contrasting views from two bridges. In T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land,* the tranquil London of Wordsworth's "Westminster Bridge" seems to awaken to nightmarish life:

Unreal City,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.

[10] Charles Lamb, the most urbanized of Romantics, typifies the insider's view of London. "I was born . . . in a crowd," he writes; "this has begot in me an entire affection for that way of life, amounting to an almost insurmountable aversion from solitude and rural scenes." Lamb's London is as teeming and strange as Wordsworth's, but its frenzied vitality tickled his grotesque fancy: "Humour, Interest, Curiosity, suck at her measureless breasts without a possibility of being satiated." ("The Londoner," in *Miscellaneous Essays and Sketches* [London, 1929], pp. 7-8).

[11] Trans. W. O. Henderson and W. H. Chaloner (Oxford, 1958), p. 31.

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The crowd that flows like an undifferentiated mass over the bridge is a procession of living spectres whom a spiritual death has undone. The fourth line—"I had not thought death had undone so many"—is a direct quotation from Canto III of the *Inferno,* and the sighs of the solitary walkers recall the damned in Canto IV whose sighs keep the air forever trembling. The church bell no longer summons the living to worship but the defunct to their daily toil. This is the totally secularized city, soiled, fragmented, phantasmagoric. It is as though the dormant houses of Wordsworth's London awoke, and one saw

> all the hands
> That are raising dingy shades
> In a thousand furnished rooms.
> ("Preludes: II")

And in place of the towers, domes, and temples lying open to the fields,

> The morning comes to consciousness
> Of faint stale smells of beer. . . .
> ("Preludes: II")

The peculiar hallmark of Eliot's city is its leveling of both the celestial and the sinister to a sleazy ennui. Horror is dissipated into vague half-ludicrous guilts, and

> Streets that follow like a tedious argument
> Of insidious intent
> To lead you to an overwhelming question. . .
> ("The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock")

. . . evade the question, trailing off into "sawdust restaurants" and tawdry places of assignation. For the Romantics, the city is a moral blemish; for its Victorian critics, the city is a formidable adversary filled with the stalking terrors of James Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night*; for Eliot, the battle has been lost, and the energy remaining after the struggle spills over into irony, the squalor of immortal longings spent in "one-night cheap hotels."

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The city as wasteland is not Eliot's invention, but part of his Victorian heritage, a heritage that looms larger with each year since his death. For in the Victorian period the physical city had already emerged as the symbol *par excellence* of the spiritual condition of modern man. As labyrinth or prison, as morgue, madhouse, wasteland or inferno, the city dominates a body of writing as sprawling and various as the phenomenon it describes. This literature reflects a radical dislocation not only in the physical environment but in the world of values as well. The problem of analysis is further complicated by the fact that the writing descriptive of London differs markedly from the writing descriptive of the new industrial cities, and even they differed widely among themselves, and from decade to decade as well as from observer to observer. A drawing of the industrial quarter of Leeds in 1885 shows, rising over the soot-encrusted slums in the foreground, at least one hundred factory chimneys belching blackly into the sky. Yet Asa Briggs entitles an impeccably researched chapter on that city "Leeds: A Study in Civic Pride" and cites a contemporary description of the town as "an effusion of the Eternal Mind."[12] The best writers, however, described the indescribable worst, and it is to them that I now wish to turn.

The topography of hell has always been rendered more graphically in literature than the topography of heaven; England's Black Country afforded the additional literary advantage of imitating the topography of hell so closely that one's symbols, as it were, lay before one's very eyes and ears and nose.[13] A writer in 1862 describes the River Irwell, which oozed through Manchester

[12] The drawing is reproduced in Joan Evans' *The Victorians* (Cambridge, 1966), Plate 89. For the quotation from Briggs, see *Victorian Cities* (London, 1963), p. 81. In fairness I must add that Briggs also cites Dickens' description of Leeds as "a beastly place, one of the nastiest I know."

[13] The descriptions of the Black Country that follow are very nearly incredible, yet strangely familiar. The familiarity perhaps stems from a sense of *déjà vu,* as of Milton's Hell revisited:

> The dismal Situation waste and wilde,
> A Dungeon horrible, on all sides round
> As one great Furnace flam'd, yet from those flames
> No light, but rather darkness visible
> Serv'd only to discover sights of woe,
> Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
> And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
> That comes to all. . .
>
> (Book I, ll. 60-67)

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like the fecal pool in Dante's Malebolge, as "a flood of liquid manure." And the canal at Bradford emitted such noxious gases that it "took fire."[14]

But literature is more than a topographic rendering, and in the novels and social criticism of the 1840's and '50's we find a larger vision of the social consequences of this urban setting. In Dickens' Coketown, in the Manchester of *Past and Present* and Mrs. Gaskell's *Mary Barton,* the blighted cityscape serves as the physical counterpart of the moral blight of an entire society. For the city, whose end is the enhancement of human life, had become a mere container of machines. "The great cry that rises from all our manufacturing cities, louder than their furnace blast," Ruskin wrote, is "that we manufacture everything there except men; we blanch cotton, and strengthen steel, and refine sugar, and shape pottery; but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine, or to form a single living spirit never enters into our estimate of advantages."[15]

Two decades before Ruskin, Alexis de Tocqueville observed the same perversion of the ends of the city during his journey through the Midlands in the 1830's. He describes Birmingham as "an immense workshop, a huge forge . . . black, dirty, and obscure," where men work "as if they must get rich by the evening and die the next day." He is struck above all by the anarchic energy of the industrial centers; everything he sees attests to "the individual powers of man; nothing [to] the directing powers of society."[16] His eye-witness description of Manchester deserves the classic status of Engels' more familiar account of the identical site a decade later. Here is one of the earliest verbal portraits of the industrial inferno, complete with River Styx:

> Thirty or forty factories rise on the tops of the hills I have just described. Their six stories tower up; their huge enclosures give notice from afar of the centralisation of industry. The wretched dwellings of the poor are scattered haphazard around them. . . . The roads which connect the still-disjointed limbs of the great city, show, like the rest, every sign of hurried and unfinished work; the incidental activity of a population bent on gain, which seeks to amass gold so as to have everything else all at once. . . . Heaps of dung, rubble from buildings, putrid stagnant pools are found here and there among the houses . . . whose ill-fitting planks and broken windows

[14] See Mumford, pp. 459-60; Briggs, p. 146.

[15] "The Nature of Gothic," in *The Genius of John Ruskin,* p. 180.

[16] *Journeys to England and Ireland,* ed. J.-P. Mayer (New Haven, 1958), pp. 94, 105.

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show them up, even from a distance, as the last refuge a man might find between poverty and death. None-the-less the wretched people reduced to living in them can still inspire jealousy of their fellow beings. Below some of their miserable dwellings is a row of cellars to which a sunken corridor leads. Twelve to fifteen human beings are crowded pell-mell into each of these damp, repulsive holes.

The fetid, muddy waters, stained with a thousand colours by the factories they pass . . . wander slowly round this refuge of poverty. . . . It is the Styx of this new Hades.

Look up and all around this place you will see the huge palaces of industry. You will hear the noise of furnaces, the whistle of steam. These vast structures keep air and light out of the human habitations which they dominate; they envelop them in perpetual fog; here is the slave; there the master. . . .

From this foul drain the greatest stream of human industry flows out to fertilise the whole world. From this filthy sewer pure gold flows. Here humanity attains its most complete development and its most brutish; here civilisation works its miracles, and civilised man is turned back almost into a savage.[17]

Tocqueville's description of Manchester appears in the journal of his visit to England in 1835. The journal is in the form of unrevised notes, unlike Engels' more studied account of the same scene. Yet the two versions of what Engels calls "this hell on earth" are virtually interchangeable. Engels places the reader on Ducie Bridge, overlooking the slums that line the "coal-black, stinking" River Irk. Barrack-like factories rise in the distance, near the workhouse and the paupers' cemetery, a trinity that requires no commentary. The workhouse is literally the high point of the scene. Its battlements and high walls seem "to threaten the whole adjacent working-class quarter like a fortress." Recessed below, in the lowest circle of Engels' hell and sprawling over a no-man's-land between city and suburb, are the slums of Little Ireland, where

a horde of ragged women and children swarm about the streets and they are just as dirty as the pigs which wallow . . . in the pools of filth. . . . The creatures who inhabit [the dilapidated cottages] and even their dark, wet cellars, and who live confined amidst all this filth and foul air—which cannot be dissipated because of the surrounding lofty buildings—must surely have sunk to the lowest level of humanity."[18]

The transition from these documentary accounts to their

[17] *Journeys*, pp. 106-108.
[18] *Condition of the Working Class*, pp. 60-61, 64, 71.

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counterparts in Victorian fiction is so slight that it is hardly perceptible. Dickens' characters, distorted by the fragmenting pressures of the city into severed quirks of humanity, often strike us as caricatures; his places do not. The horror of Coketown is that it is *not* a satire but a deadly accurate composite of the industrial Inferno.[19] So too, the melodrama and thin characters in Disraeli's *Sybil; or, The Two Nations* (1845) obscure the accuracy of his portrait of the savagely squalid town of Wodgate, where the apprentice steel-grinders are worked for sixteen hours a day, sold by one master to another, fed on carrion, and lodged in cellars. Like the Communist Engels, the Tory Disraeli drew many of his facts directly from Parliamentary Commissions of Inquiry into the condition of the mines, factories, and manufacturing towns. Some attempt to explain how such conditions arose and the horror they evoked is indispensable to an understanding of the literature of the Victorian city, which is above all a literature of social analysis and protest.

Perhaps the most far-reaching source of change was the breakdown of the traditional boundaries that had given shape to the city and to the social relations within it. One thinks of the medieval city, with its lucid division between walled town and open field, a division of life into two spheres as crisply defined as the lines in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's allegorical fresco of Good Government. The "destructive dynamism"[20] of capitalism blew those walls apart, and a kind of formless organism—"enlarg'd without dimension, terrible," in Blake's prophetic phrase[21]—spread out from the urban centers.

[19] See *Hard Times,* Book I, Chap. V: "It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and to-morrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next."

[20] The quotation is from Lewis Mumford's *The City in History,* p. 413. The chapter ironically entitled "Paleotechnic Paradise: Coketown" paints a bleak and potent picture indeed, corrected in detail but not in substance by Asa Briggs' *Victorian Cities.*

[21] *Jerusalem,* Chapter I, Plate 5, l. 5.

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We think of suburbia as a distinctly American, twentieth-century phenomenon, but it is a nineteenth-century invention and nothing is more characteristic of the Victorian literature of the city than a loathing of suburbia, as of some uncontrolled, cancerous growth. Ruskin writes that cities are no longer crystalized about a coherent center but rather "clotted and coagulated; spots of dreadful mildew, spreading by patches and blotches over the country they consume."[22] The same revulsion from formlessness figures in a remarkable passage from Ruskin's *The Seven Lamps of Architecture.* Its force derives from something far deeper than esthetic disgust. For the metaphors of decay throughout the passage apply not only to the jerry-built houses but to the crumbling national values they embody:

> I look upon those pitiful concretions of lime and clay which spring up, in mildewed forwardness, out of the kneaded fields about our capital—upon those thin, tottering, foundationless shells of splintered wood and imitated stone—upon those gloomy rows of formalised minuteness, alike without difference and without fellowship, as solitary as similar—not merely with the careless disgust of an offended eye, not merely with sorrow for a desecrated landscape, but with a painful foreboding that the roots of our national greatness must be deeply cankered when they are thus loosely struck in their native ground.[23]

In a single alliterating phrase—houses *as solitary as similar*—Ruskin diagnoses the peculiar dreariness and vacuity of suburbia, its achievement of conformity without community.

Of course the suburbs of London, a capital city and commercial and cultural center, wore a less sinister aspect than the excrescences of the industrial cities. But they shared the same lack of local government and municipal services as the New Towns. Manchester and Birmingham, for example, were not incorporated until 1838, and neither achieved the status of a city until the second half of the century. The growth of the industrial centers was at once wildly chaotic and, as it were, extra-legal. Their inhabitants were largely outside the ancient communion of the national Church and illiterate to the degree that sixty percent of those in the district described by Engels could not even sign their own names. Brutalized by an economic system which virtually

[22] *The Works of John Ruskin,* ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London, 1903-12), XX, 113.

[23] "The Lamp of Memory," in *The Genius of John Ruskin,* p. 132.

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enslaved them, degraded by a physical environment that scarcely supported life, the industrial proletariat of early Victorian England was, as Tocqueville said, "turned back almost into a savage." This whole noxious complex is epitomized by Dickens in a passage from *The Old Curiosity Shop:* Nell and her grandfather come upon

> a long, flat straggling suburb . . . where not a blade of grass was seen to grow; where not a bud put forth its promise in the spring. . . .
>
> On mounds of ashes by the wayside, sheltered only by a few rough boards, or rotten pent-house roofs, strange engines spun and writhed like tortured creatures; clanking their iron chains, shrieking in their rapid whirl from time to time as though in torment unendurable, and making the ground tremble with their agonies. Dismantled houses here and there appeared, tottering to the earth, propped up by fragments of others that had fallen down, unroofed, windowless, blackened, desolate, but yet inhabited. Men, women, children, wan in their looks and ragged in attire, tended the engines, fed their tributary fires, begged upon the road, or scowled half-naked from the doorless houses . . . and still, before, behind, and to the right and left, was the same interminable perspective of brick towers, never ceasing in their black vomit, blasting all things living or inanimate, shutting out the face of the day, and closing in on all these horrors with a dense dark cloud.
>
> (Chapter XLV)

The horror of such a scene, quite apart from its human wrecks, stems from its monotonous featurelessness, which Dickens compares to "the horror of oppressive dreams." In his book on *The Image of the City,* Kevin Lynch stresses the connection between an ill-defined cityscape and the anxious sense of disorientation it engenders. The absence of landmarks, of places of historic association or of natural features such as the line of a river—in short, a visually "illegible" city—can produce a confusion akin to the terror of being lost in a maze. So deep, apparently, is the need for points of orientation that in a maze experiment the human subjects "developed affection for such simple landmarks as a rough board."[24] In this context, the Victorian archetype of the city as labyrinth takes on profounder meaning than that of a mere literary conceit. Cities not only spread out in formless limbs, but

[24] Lynch (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), p. 125. Cf. the account on p. 126 of a scene from a contemporary Italian novel in which the Florentines in their daily walks continue to follow the outlines of non-existent streets through a demolished section of their city.

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their old historic core was being gutted to make room for railway terminals, factories, warehouses, and all the accoutrements of a growing industrial economy, including a vastly expanded urban population crowded into less and less viable space.[25] The nightmarish flight of Oliver Twist through the streets of London, or of Nell and her grandfather through the desolate industrial maze in the passage I just quoted, conveys the horror of an "oppressive dream," but like all of Dickens' dreams, it is grounded in the firmest reality. The same menacing corridors and blind alleys figure in James Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night*. The solitary narrator wanders through unending streets, which merge and cross and are "black as subterranean lairs." Like Dickens, Thomson was an obsessive haunter of London's streets at night, but in Thomson's poem the city has lost all the hard actuality of Dickens' London and become surreal, a city of the mind without definition and without escape. Even the orienting points of the stars are absent from the night sky, and in this metropolis-turned-necropolis, the houses are "dark and still as tombs." Time, which moves with spastic rapidity in Dickens' novels, here "crawleth like a monstrous snake,/Wounded and slow and very venomous." Like Dante's Hell, Thomson's city admits of no exit, either in time or place; the night is dreadful because it is endless. The urban labyrinth of Dickens here becomes a labyrinth of the spirit from which all transcendence has fled. Infinite ennui replaces the classical torments of hell, for in this unending City of Man even the desired torments of God are beyond reach:

> I reached the portal common spirits fear,
> And read the words above it, dark yet clear,
> 'Leave hope behind, all ye who enter here':

[25] Hence Ruskin argued in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* for the preservation of ancient buildings not as an antiquarian luxury but as a civic and psychological necessity. Cf. the end of "The Lamp of Memory":

> The very quietness of nature is gradually withdrawn from us; thousands who once in their necessarily prolonged travel were subjected to an influence, from the silent sky and slumbering fields, more effectual than known or confessed, now bear with them even there the ceaseless fever of their life; and along the iron veins that traverse the frame of our country, beat and flow the fiery pulses of its exertion, hotter and faster every hour. All vitality is concentrated through those throbbing arteries into the central cities; the country is passed over like a green sea by narrow bridges, and we are thrown back in continually closer crowds upon the city gates. The only influence which can in any wise *there* take the place of that of the woods and fields, is the power of ancient Architecture.

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> And would have passed in, gratified to gain
> That positive eternity of pain,
> Instead of this insufferable inane.
>
> (ll. 355-60)

The Victorian literature of the city, then, reflects a psychological and spiritual displacement which parallels the chaos wrought in the physical environment. Nor is it surprising that the economic forces which changed the face of England produced radical changes in values and social relationships. Utilitarian ethics in alliance with laissez-faire economics effectively broke up the traditional allegiances to community and to an older order in which men believed themselves bound to the land, to each other, and to God. The sense of neighborhood, which is the urban equivalent to natural features in a landscape, became increasingly blurred as rural populations drifted into cities that were themselves in the process of explosive change. At the same time that the countryside was being ripped up, the benevolent Nature that the Romantics worshipped began to seem "red in tooth and claw."

Even the concept of time was taking on a more frightening aspect. Representing the traditionalist view, the historian George Rawlinson contended, in the same year that Darwin published *The Origin of Species* (1859), that Moses lived only a few generations after Adam and might actually have heard "of the Temptation and Fall at fifth hand."[26] A decade later, *The City of Dreadful Night* (1874) reflects the shift from comfortably measurable Biblical time to the bleak temporal vistas of evolution. The narrator comes upon a hideous, aged, half-human creature who crawls on all fours "through vast wastes of horror-haunted time" and vainly seeks an irrecoverable Eden. While the past seemed to recede indefinitely, the railroad and the increased tempo of urban life brought a sense of dizzying acceleration to the present. One of Thackeray's characters contrasts the coaching world of "only yesterday" with the new era of railroads and describes himself as a survivor out of the ancient world, "like Father Noah and his family out of the Ark."[27] And Dickens' Mr. Dombey rides with hallucinatory speed,

[26] See R. A. Forsyth, "The Victorian Self-Image and the Emergent City Sensibility," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, XXXIII (1963), pp. 61-77.

[27] Briggs, p. 14.

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> Away, with a shriek, and a roar, and a rattle, from the town, burrowing among the dwellings of men and making the streets hum, flashing out into the meadows for a moment, mining in through the damp earth, booming on in darkness and heavy air, bursting out again into the sunny day so bright and wide; away, with a shriek, and a roar, and a rattle through the chalk, through the mould, through the clay, through the rock, among objects close at hand and almost in the grasp, ever flying from the traveller, and a deceitful distance ever moving slowly within him—like as in the track of the remorseless monster, Death![28]

If Dickens' appeal lay in his actualizing the tempo and feel of the city, the novels of George Eliot and Thomas Hardy offered the contrary appeal of escape to the older, slower rhythms of provincial life and rural setting. The town of Middlemarch serves as a rich, communal nexus in which people grow and change and interact. The flow of time is dense and steady, as stable as the mores of the community or the furnishings of its homes. In Dickens' London, time flows in spurts; the pace is cinematic; people do not grow and interact, but remain fixed centers of consciousness, suspended as it were in an unstable medium in which objects can never be relied on to remain safely inanimate and people are often locked into mannerisms as unchanging as stones.

All of the multiple changes that I have been tracing—the de-

[28] Chapter 20. Of course such new experiences produced radically differing responses in different temperaments. The actress Fanny Kemble (1809-93), for example, described her first railroad journey as follows: "You can't imagine how strange it seemed to be journeying on thus, without any visible cause of progress other than the magical machine, with the flying white breath and rhythmical unvarying pace. . . . When I closed my eyes this sensation of flying was quite delightful. . . . I had a perfect sense of security and not the slightest fear" (*Early Victorian England,* ed. G. M. Young [Oxford, 1934], II, 290). And Tennyson's ride on the first Liverpool-Manchester run in 1830 resulted in this celebrated couplet from "Locksley Hall":

> Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range,
> Let the great world spin forever down the ringing grooves of change.

John Stuart Mill points out in his essay on "The Spirit of the Age" that the unique quality of the moment was its extreme self-consciousness of change, and that to men who identified with the present, such change was "a subject of exultation"; to men still bound to the past, it was a source "of terror." Hence it is that the Victorian period appears to us in two contradictory guises, as The Age of Progress, and The Age of Anxiety. Almost all of the writers on the city with whom I am dealing greeted the new period with apprehension, but I would be guilty of distortion were I not to acknowledge an opposing tradition, best exemplified by the brilliant Philistine Macaulay, for whom an acre of crowded Middlesex was "worth a principality in Utopia." (Review of Southey's *Colloquies*). For an excellent analysis of Victorian attitudes toward time and change, see Jerome H. Buckley's *The Triumph of Time* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966).

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secration of nature, the blurring of traditional boundaries between town and country, the physical chaos and social dislocation in the cities, the shock to religious faith produced by evolution and the vistas of "horror-haunted time" that it opened up—intensified the attachment to place at the very moment that the physical and spiritual environment seemed most in flux. The lost orphan is a stock character in Victorian fiction not merely for sentimental reasons but because, as a figure wrenched from the elemental unit of the human family, he symbolized the sense of displacement the Victorians felt so keenly. In this connection, it is worth noting that the author of *The City of Dreadful Night* was in fact an orphan, and the young Dickens felt himself outrageously thrust into that role by his father's imprisonment for debt in the Marshalsea. A literature of nightmare on the one hand, and of nostalgia on the other, grew out of this intensified awareness of place. Dickens' city streets are fearful, but his old country inns, with roaring fires and tables piled with Gargantuan joints, provide the coziest rooms in English fiction. And the most moving passages in Ruskin describe the world that vanished with his childhood.

The destruction of that childhood Eden and its bearing upon the novel of the city form the subject of Ruskin's remarkable essay entitled *Fiction, Fair and Foul* (1880-81). The essay opens with an idyllic picture of the hawthorne hedges and crystal stream by which Ruskin had played near his home in suburban London. He revisits the scene to find the ground gashed to pieces and littered with "mixed dust of every unclean thing that can crumble in draught, and mildew of every unclean thing that can rot or rust in damp: ashes and rags, beer-bottles and old shoes, battered pans, smashed crockery, shreds of nameless clothes . . . bones, and ordure indescribable," all kneaded together in "pits of stinking dust and mortal slime." The modern sensibility is formed on this kind of desolate nastiness and develops by default an affinity for modes of decay, physical and psychological. This taste is further whetted by

> the hot fermentation and unwholesome secrecy of the population crowded in large cities, each mote in the misery lighter, as an individual soul, than a dead leaf, but becoming oppressive and infectious each to his neighbour, in the smoking mass of decay. The resulting modes of mental ruin and distress are continually new; and in a certain sense, worth study in their monstrosity; they have

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accordingly developed a corresponding science of fiction, concerned mainly with the description of such forms of disease, like the botany of leaf-lichens.

In *Fiction, Fair and Foul* Ruskin defines a new genre, the novel of the city, the pathological violence of which he attributes to a kind of death-wish engendered by the monotony, dehumanization, and imprisoning solitude of urban life. Even the relieving variety of the seasons has vanished from the city, where the utmost power of a storm "is to choke the gutters, and the finest magic of spring, to change mud into dust." To drive home his point, Ruskin compiles from *Bleak House* a Homeric catalogue of deaths by violent or strange causes, including assassination, madness, paralysis, starvation, chagrin, and, most grotesque of all, the spontaneous combustion of Mr. Krook.[29]

The affinity for aberration and criminality that has drawn modern critics to Dickens revolted Ruskin. Yet despite his disgust, Ruskin remains one of the earliest Victorians to have understood "our" Dickens, the dark symbolist and social critic, at a time when he was praised for his caricatures and sentimental death-scenes. The jolly picaresque journey of Mr. Pickwick through the open countryside recapitulates the "rural ride" taken by English literature through Fielding's *Tom Jones* and into the nineteenth century. In a way that was to presage all his future work, as well as the future of English fiction, Dickens leads Mr. Pickwick from the country to the city, where his eyes are opened to the "wretched dungeon" of London's Fleet Prison. In *Oliver Twist* and *The Old Curiosity Shop,* the movement is reversed—from the terrors of the city to the tranquil refuge of the country. But the repose that the countryside offers Oliver is repeatedly associated with the repose of death,[30] and Nell's flight from London only takes her deeper into the industrial inferno and ends in actual death. In the great sequence of novels that follow, the city dominates Dickens' imagination and becomes for the first time in English literature what our own experience confirms it to be.

To appreciate Dickens' achievement we have only to consider the unmanageableness of his subject. The city is more complex,

[29] *The Genius of John Ruskin,* pp. 435-40.

[30] See J. Hillis Miller's *Charles Dickens: The World of his Novels* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), pp. 78-79. Miller persuasively demonstrates the connection between "any beautiful landscape" in *Oliver Twist* and a desire for a "prenatal paradise" linked with death.

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mobile and vast than the power of our senses to take in at any given moment. Our perception of the city is necessarily local, fragmentary, intermittent; to see it panoramically, we must withdraw ourselves and lose in immediacy what we gain in clarity. The vogue for "balloon views" of London no doubt gratified a desire to perceive what no eye had previously seen in its totality. But such views, however artfully transcribed in words, achieved their comprehensiveness at the cost of concreteness. "It was a wonderful sight," two aerial observers of London wrote in 1862,

> to behold that vast bricken mass of churches and hospitals, banks and prisons, palaces and workhouses . . . to contemplate from afar that strange conglomeration of vice and avarice and low cunning, of noble aspirations and human heroism, and to grasp it in the eye, in all its incongruous integrity, at a single glance—to take, as it were, an angel's view of that huge town where, perhaps, there is more virtue and more iniquity, more wealth and more want, brought together into one dense focus than in any other part of the earth.[31]

This is not London, but reflections that the panorama of the city evoked. It captures extraordinarily well the moral ambiguity of all cities; yet it remains essentially an "angel's view," not Dickens'. The early Soviet poet Mayakovski approaches the city from a radically different perspective, one which is remarkably close to Dickens' own:

> The city itself is becoming an element from whose womb a new urban man is being born. We city dwellers don't know the forests, fields and flowers—we are acquainted with the tunnels of the streets, their movement, noises, rumbling, flickering, eternal circulation. . . . Everything has become lightning-fast, swift as it is on motion picture films. The flowing, calm, unhurried rhythms of the old poetry don't correspond to the psyche of the modern city dweller. . . . There are no flowing, measured, curved lines. The picture of the city is one characterized by corners, fractures, zigzags.[32]

Dickens' novels are full of the surprising corners and zigzags that characterize one's experience of the city street; his tempo is set to the kaleidoscopic pace of passing crowds, and his people seem to soliloquize into the busy void. The improbable coincidences in his plots convey the sense of a sudden, chance

[31] Henry Mayhew and John Binny, *The Criminal Prisons of London* (London, 1862), p. 143. Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* paints a marvelously circumstantial picture of the street-life of Victorian London and is one of the few indispensable works on the subject.

[32] See the unpubl. diss. (Columbia, 1967) by Elizabeth Beaujour, "The Invisible Land: A Study of the Imagination of Iurii Olesha," p. 164.

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encounter, collisions between people or events that propel themselves with frightening freedom through a world whose traditional social bonds have broken to pieces. The child—lost, exploited, or pursued—in the city streets is the perfect subject to let loose in this void. Totally immersed in the totally unintelligible, he perceives the city with all the sensory closeness of childhood, yet cannot comprehend it. His very incomprehension is the most rational possible response to a society which is, as Dickens sees it, in essence irrational.

Thus Dickens' novels mimic the very modes in which we perceive the city. The criss-crossing strands of his plots are appropriate to his labyrinthine subject, and the very profusion of his characters, each imprisoned in his own exuberant vitality, reflects the vitality and mystery of the streets. But this narrative and psychological fragmentation would by itself produce chaos. And so what Dickens disjoins in plot and character, he puts together through symbol and fable. The result is a sense of wholeness, like that of the "balloon view" of the city, achieved without the remoteness and unnatural stillness of such views. For example, not a scene, character or event in *Little Dorrit* is unrelated to the overriding symbol of the prison, first rendered literally in the opening scene; then transferred to the tomb-like tottering house of the deathly Mrs. Clenham; then shifted to the Marshalsea in which Mr. Dorrit is imprisoned; extended to the labyrinthine operation of the government's Circumlocution Office, into which men disappear for years; rendered again in the mansion of the magnate Mr. Merdle, who is the prisoner of his own butler and of the bejewelled, frigid bosom of his wife; and yet again in the paranoid Miss Wade, who escapes the Prison of Society only to become more firmly locked in her own obsessions.

The unifying role of fable in Dickens is harder to define than that of symbol and seems to run counter to the vivid actuality of his urban settings. In the category of fable I would include the capacity of his characters to gather around themselves a kind of demonic force, either for good or evil, a demonism that often spills over into objects which take on a furious animation of their own, like the ostentatious Podsnap silver that boasts aloud, "Wouldn't you like to melt me down?" One cannot read Dickens very long without coming upon these animated objects in improbable stories about improbable characters who are never far

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removed from those in a fairy tale—witches like Good Mrs. Brown, devils like Fagin, or secular saints like Little Dorrit. Even in the "mature" novels of social criticism this element lies close to the surface, and one of the most queerly Dickensian of incongruities is his transplanting of these ancient motifs from their traditionally rural setting to the modern commercial metropolis. No house could be more stolidly prosaic than the house of the stolid Mr. Dombey. Yet for his daughter Florence, who is virtually buried alive within it, "no magic dwelling-place in magic story, shut up in the heart of a thick wood, was ever more solitary and deserted to the fancy than was her father's mansion in its grim reality, as it stood lowering on the street" (Chapter 23). Dickens' novels simultaneously inhabit two worlds, the one we know of brick and pavement, and the forgotten one of demons and "thick woods" and saints. The two elements combine in the unique Dickensian fusion of moral fable and superbly-observed novel of the city. Finally, through fable Dickens restores to the city a sense of lost transcendence. For fable serves him as the equivalent of the nature that had been bricked out of the city and as a link to the supernatural.

The Victorians never felt more cut off from the transcendent than in their cities. The bleakest moment in Tennyson's *In Memoriam* occurs as the poet stands vigil by the dark house of his dead friend, waiting in "the long unlovely street" as ". . . ghastly thro' the drizzling rain/On the bald street breaks the blank day" (Section VII). Ruskin draws no starker contrast than that between St. Mark's Cathedral, ruling over the splendor of fifteenth-century Venice, and St. Paul's, overlooking the slums of nineteenth-century London.[33] In *Bleak House,* in the fermenting center of those slums, Joe the half-starved street-sweep looks up at the Cross of St. Paul's and sees only "the crowning confusion of the great, confused city; so golden, so high up, so far out of his reach" (Chapter 19). Yet if the gods seem to withdraw from the Victorian city, they never wholly vanish; Joe still gazes up, however unavailingly, at St. Paul's Cross, unlike Eliot's sepulchral clerks who cross London Bridge with eyes cast down, like Dante's damned. In the century of literature we have surveyed, the city seems to undergo a second Fall, and in place of the promised Jerusalem arises the modern Inferno.

[33] "The Two Boyhoods," in *The Genius of John Ruskin,* pp. 114-15.

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WILLIAM STAFFORD

At Home on Earth

FOR WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW, human interchange cannot avail. We hear each other, but we do not hear the world. Outside our councils the world is beginning to speak. It will never finish; no person can interpret it fully. But it is there, and that it has something urgent to say, we are beginning to be convinced.

There is a stillness about the ecological threat. We are surrounded, but the danger hardly appears—but it is there. Was there yesterday, but not so demanding. Political issues begin to sound small, or social issues, or whatever. A giant has come along, outside human concerns. That always was a wilderness out there; now it is the wilderness itself that has moved its feet, still, waiting.

Everyone's life is a succession of emergencies—breathe, and be: in each little breath we all participate.

We being local, what we touch is ours by touch. If small, then doubly ours; for if we look out, all is going away, these days, growing large, accumulating, and coming back strong. Air inside the cupped hand is a gift—felt, valued. Where will the gift come next? The answer depends on where we reach.

Some people like to say the bad things that may happen—they delight in dreaming up extremes. The words of such people can be discounted. But they may be true.

Present advantage and future consequence often conflict, and often the effects bear on different groups. And the time lapse of the consequences may vary greatly. Various consequences may compound each other, from various places and agents. No one can get ahead of what time unfolds.

In the world where what is outside man extends into mystery, awe, worship, respect, reverence—poetry, the stance that accepts, may be salvational. The psyche may depend on limitation, recurrence, stability, as do organic processes. The disruption of feeling for purposes of gain may endanger a balance the individual has to have, a stability that cannot change at the pace needed for intellectual accommodation to a runaway environment.

* * *

The above thoughts came to me as a result of brooding about the

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books under review: current books that confront ecology and its great shadow of doom and relevance.[1] They group themselves—with a little forcing—into three companies: scare books, background information and theory books, and planning books. All have inner variety, of course—scare books with information and gestures toward solutions, planning books with charts and justifications, and information books with plenty of scare: sometimes the calmest authors provide the most terror.

Since Silent Spring comes first in the scare group, as it examines the background, impact, and continuing effect of Rachel Carson's 1962 bestseller, by common judgment the forerunner of our present concern about threats to the environment. Frank Graham reminds of the fights Rachel Carson's book stirred, and of the rallying point it still is for those determined to force realizations about accumulating pesticides.

The Carson book hit hard, and Mr. Graham wholeheartedly supports it all, its validity, its continuing effect. His backward glance invites, however, some complex judgments. The whole tide of concern now about ecology attests to conviction people have about the alarm Rachel Carson voiced: everyone who takes time to consider the potential in biological trends is apparently edgy. It is true, however, that critics of *Silent Spring* could point to alarmist rhetoric that helped popularize the book; for example, chapter titles: "Rivers of Death," "And No Birds Sing," "The Rumblings of an Avalanche," "Elixirs of Death." The book had a tone of accusation and a readiness to extrapolate incident into inconclusive hints of drama, as typified in an account of a fish kill in the Colorado River below Austin, Texas, in 1961. Ending her account of that event, Rachel Carson uses speculation that is alarming but might give her critics ground for objection: ". . . the whole toxic outflow was diverted to the waters of the open Gulf. What were its effects there? And what of the outflow of scores of other rivers, carrying contaminants perhaps equally lethal?"

In looking back on *Silent Spring's* influence, Frank Graham is its champion, but is generally milder: "The agribusiness community . . . must increasingly divert part of its attention from the unalloyed benefits to the costs of pesticide use."

[1] SINCE SILENT SPRING by *Frank Graham, Jr.* Houghton Mifflin. $6.95. TERRACIDE by *Ron M. Linton.* Little, Brown. $7.95. CHALLENGE FOR SURVIVAL edited by *Pierre Dansereau.* Columbia University Press. $7.95. THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY? by *Desmond King-Hele.* St. Martin's Press. $5.95. THE ONLY EARTH WE HAVE by *Laurence Pringle.* Macmillan. $4.50. NEW LIVES, NEW LANDSCAPES by *Nan Fairbrother.* Knopf. $12.50. BIOLOGY AND THE FUTURE OF MAN edited by *Philip Handler.* Oxford University Press. $12.50. AMERICA'S CHANGING ENVIRONMENT edited by *Roger Revelle* and *Hans H. Landsberg.* Houghton Mifflin. $6.95. REASON AWAKE by *René Dubos.* Columbia University Press. $6.95. THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVOLUTION by *Max Nicholson.* McGraw-Hill. $10.00. THE RSVP CYCLES by *Lawrence Halprin.* Braziller. $15.00. DESIGN WITH NATURE by *Ian L. McHarg.* Natural History Press. $19.95.

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Terracide carries on the full attack that launched the ecology scare. The author was chairman of the Secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare's Task Force on Environmental Health and Related Problems; he has put together a science-fact story that outdoes science fiction—a roll call of environmental emergencies we read about in passing but seldom put together for contemplation. The smelling, eating, hearing, and drinking hazards of life in America come rolling out chapter by chapter in a recital that sometimes becomes almost comic, except that it is too real. According to Mr. Linton one hundred per cent of the towns on the lower Mississippi pour raw sewage into that suffering river. Per person, solid wastes are accumulating so fast—along with increase in the population—that projections show strangulation coming, not *if*, but *when*. Horrors recounted include the long nausea of Selbyville, Delaware, with its siege of smells from the Bishop Processing Plant in Bishop, Maryland, with the mayor witnessing about interruptions of the Town Council by citizens protesting, one woman "with tears running down her face, saying she had not slept the night before, couldn't eat her breakfast, and that her husband did not retain his breakfast. . . ."

Mr. Linton gives the saga of Mr. Alex Baron of New York City, who sought sanity for himself and his family in the torrent of sound when the New York Transit Authority extended the Sixth Avenue subway from Fifty-second Street to Fifty-eighth—Baron found that in Europe a quieter jackhammer had been made, and he had it demonstrated at the Plaza of Lincoln Center.

Puzzles in identifying types and sources of smell pollution have forced scientists to resort to "organoleptic measurement of smells"—use of the human nose. Mr. Linton goes on to list residues of additives that may be in our bread, in addition to what must be on the label: benzoyl peroxide, chlorine, chlorine dioxide, nitrosyl chloride, oxides of nitrogen, potassium bromate, potassium iodate, and so on through a dozen more substances.

Terracide, like many other recitals of current dangers, does not have to draw much on material not available to all of us in the news day by day; but the impact of the book comes from the sorting out and cumulative recital of what we accept—like our bearable but contaminated air—daily. Again, as in the careful message quoted from *Since Silent Spring,* a fairly mild statement grows out of the list of horrors: "Our national philosophy must strike a balance between the use of the environment to provide material wants and the preservation of the environment to enhance man's physical and mental well-being."

Challenge for Survival finds its way among the scare books partly by its title and partly by some of the content, but it draws less on the kind of accounts we could all sift out from the news: the book derives from a symposium, "Challenge for Survival/ 1968: Land, Air, and Water for Man in Megalopolis," given at The New York Botanical Garden

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and at The Rockefeller University. Throughout the articles and responses that make up the book the reader begins to realize historical attitudes and trends that link all human culture to the current emergency. As an example, Ian McHarg puts forward a basic theme: the tradition of Western man, particularly as exemplified in early parts of The Bible, promotes an attitude of overcoming nature, whereas the way for survival is through participation without the impulse to override what nature gives.

In this book the language that delivers the scare begins to have a sombre power and reserve of irony that is all the more impressive for not being strident. Exemplifying that balance and reserve is a statement by Mr. George M. Woodwell of the Department of Biology, Brookhaven National Laboratory, a statement that wells out of a good-tempered admission that there is evidence of a decline in use of DDT: "With more than a billion pounds of DDT now cycling in the biosphere, and with abundant evidence of effects, there can hardly be a downward trend in use that is steep enough to avoid irreparable changes in the Earth's biota, changes that can only be deleterious to our long-term interests in survival."

And in discussing a background for our problems with pollution Mr. Woodwell offers an insight that satisfies a need for understanding that one begins to feel, like a hunger pang, when reading through complex accounts of horrendous and stealthy increases in the hazards around us:

> The most important assumption that led to problems [with pollution] is the assumption of dilution. Toxic materials released into the environment are widely assumed to be diluted to innocuousness . . . the material "disappears."
>
> So ingrained is this philosophy that its corollary, the right to pollute, has become a second major philosophical and, for somewhat different reasons, legal assumption: we tend to require detailed scientific proof of direct, personal damage to man as a prerequisite for even considering restriction of any right to pollute.
>
> On the basis of these two suppositions, dilution and the assumption of the right to pollute until proof of damage, we, man, all over the world, are now well embarked on a program of releasing unmeasured quantities of quite literally thousands of different kinds of biologically active substances into the general environment. It is one of the spectacular contradictions of our time that in the age of science we should be entering blindly on a thousand unplanned, uncontrolled, unmonitored, unguided, largely unrestrained, and totally unscientific experiments with the whole world as the subject and with survival at hazard.

Lewis Mumford, in a summary statement about the symposium, speaking about "Survival of Plants and Man," shows care about the

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living things that surround man. He points out that neolithic domestication, as evidenced by archaeological discoveries, brought constructive improvement to all of life through "loving care of plants." This "partnership" between man and plants Mr. Mumford sees as weakened by our "underdimensioned, organically deficient technology." He asserts: "This active partnership between man and plants did something more than assure their common survival: it provided, as never before, the conditions for their further development."

A curious blend between a scare book and a reassuring book is *The End of the Twentieth Century?* There are quick turns and a juggling array of lively topics, a rush of speculation about what may come. This is in some ways a jaunty book. There are charts to show proportions in our environment; for instance, we learn that the energy required for sustaining life in one person is about the supply needed for one 150 watt bulb, which is about that supplied under best conditions to one square meter of the earth's surface by the sun. This book is a quick tour of the dangers and the possibilities in man's use of science and technology.

The background information and theory books bring a whole new tone, though they are so various that categorizing is bound to be faulty. (There are books for children, for instance, that lurk at the edge of this category, like Laurence Pringle's paperback *The Only Earth We Have,* or Nan Fairbrother's chatty *New Lives, New Landscapes,* on improving the quality of life in Britain.) Most notable among the books in this current sweep is *Biology and the Future of Man,* edited by Philip Handler, President of the National Academy of Sciences and chairman of the Academy's Study Committee on Research in the Life Sciences. As official adviser on science and technology to the federal government, the Academy attracted ranking scientists for panels to survey the present state of selected scientific disciplines. *Biology and the Future of Man* is edited from panel reports on the life sciences.

Formidable as this book is, with its more than 900 pages of close text, chart, and formula sequences, it can entice and carry along the nonspecialist, especially in those chapters dealing with "the environmental crisis." Welling out of the reasoned text in chapter after chapter are sentences that leap, without stridency, into science-fact excitement. Once the reader picks up connections, a sense of responsibility comes alive; and the more you learn the more immediate becomes involvement.

To start with some of the jolts, here is a summary judgment tagged onto a chart of steep rises in "certain industries which have an influence on pollution": "If these projections are even approximately correct, and if each of these enterprises grows without appropriate monitoring for its ecological consequences, the totality could con-

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stitute the saddest, most brutal and most disastrous act of vandalism in history."

More quietly, but surfacing into consciousness with equal effect, are casual revelations such as these:

> Ecologists are particularly concerned lest some ill-considered pollutant—a detergent, an insecticide, or a contraceptive drug—interfere with some crucial link in a cycle of microbial geochemistry, such as nitrogen fixation or sulfate reduction, and make the earth uninhabitable.
>
> The world's food supply, long known to be inadequate in quantity and quality, is becoming yet more inadequate.
>
> The most difficult problems are found in the "subliminal" toxology—i.e., the effects of materials entering the organism in trace amounts over prolonged periods as in the case of food additives, pesticides in our foods, or water supplies, or air contaminants inhaled day after day. . . .

The disquiet about materials that touch man today takes on validity from an explanation that though toxic materials have always been part of the environment, a new situation now exists:

> The novelty in man's exposures, in our present chemical civilization, lies in the greatly increased number and variety of new chemicals. The enormity of the health problem from these as yet largely unexplored chemical exposures lies in the fact that 500,000 to 600,000 chemicals (a list growing at the rate of 500 annually) are produced and used in this country. Their ultimate distribution and fate can hardly be guessed. What each compound or what several or many compounds acting together are doing to man and especially to the complex interacting balance of life about us and including us is almost a complete mystery. How can the significance of these exposures be assessed? Even if attention is restricted to events that directly affect man, the magnitude of the problem is staggering.

Hovering over phrases in the quotation above are certain concepts that enhance the effect. One is the discovery that separate chemicals when brought together in man sometimes have extra consequences not to be anticipated from separate uses. Such combining may bring about "potentiation" of the substances, with unforeseen results. And in regard to the "complex interacting balance of life" referred to above, a glimpse of the complexity comes from summary statements about man's food: 100 or so species of plants and animals provide most of man's food, but "It has been estimated that at least 150,000 plants and animal species in the United States are involved in the collection and transfer of the sun's energy for the maintenance of life."

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Realizations abound, from stray mentionings in this elaborate book. Some of them are drastic glimpses: "The ambient noise level of the environment has risen both with increasing population density and with increasing use of machinery as a substitute for human or animal muscle-power." This statement is associated with the revelation that of course noise at certain often-experienced intensities damages hearing and that noise levels are regulated in terms of accepted, anticipated thresholds of damage to the hearing of workers in certain occupations. In other contexts certain words leap out—like the word *irreversible:* ". . . we need to learn how to avoid irreversible change. If we do not, we deny future generations the opportunity to choose the kind of world in which they wish to live."

It is not only the disquieting that leaps from the pages of the careful articles in *Biology and the Future of Man;* there are flashes of regard for human adaptations now much in need of defense. In one passage "mutual" is picked out as a key word in ecology, and in this context art becomes significant, as part of man's adjustment to experience. Following out a discussion of mutuality leads to productive cultural concepts: ". . . effective applications of ecology are surrounded by political and moral questions whose resolution is itself a set of problems in applied ecology. It is instructive to think of the new ecology as Thoreau's ambiguous legacy. Thoreau's concept of Concord was what we now call a 'model ecosystem,' though he formulated and studied it in advance of all the technology we believe to be necessary in such studies."

In such conceptualizing, man's cultural adaptations play a part; ritual, for instance, is seen as "a servo-mechanism which maintains a number of variables in a system, or set of interlocking systems, within ranges of viability. Its operation helps to maintain an undegraded environment. . . ."

This book, formidable for the non-specialist, proves to be rich and available, especially in such chapters as "What is Ecology," "The Diversity of Life," "On Feeding Mankind," "Renewable Resources," "Biology and Industrial Technology," "Environmental Health," and the summarizing last chapter "Biology and the Future of Man."

It is in the application to action of theory, research, and discovery that *America's Changing Environment* makes its most distinctive contribution. Reading such a book, one feels the urgency to do something, but seeing the gap between what is needed and what can be done immediately brings about indecision. The writers in this book —which is made of chapters by various experts brought together to improve "decision-making in environmental problems"—provide the richest spread of formulations to help in understanding why indecision exists on crucial problems—and the chapters formulate some alleviations for the despair an alert reader must feel.

Here is a formulation to help one endure, without being lonely, a state of mind brought on by reading ecology today: "Ecosystems at the

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highest level of biological integration are not only more complex than we think they are, but more complex than we *can* think. Thus, we can never achieve a total understanding of the human-society-plus-environment system." And the introduction to the book lists a summary of reasons for lag in environment control, letting us understand our lag without excusing us from action. That encouragement of action amid discouragements from the problems is faced bluntly by Ann Louise Strong in her chapter on "Crisis Mentality and the Deteriorating Environment": "Can Americans face, consider, and resolve problems before their crisis proportions are palpably and tangibly manifest to us as individuals?" "Can a crisis afflicting a large segment of society be comprehended as a crisis by those whom it does not yet afflict?"

One helpful distinction offered, a preliminary readiness in tackling environmental problems, is that between political decisions and technological solutions: sometimes the stress of political issues can be alleviated by adjustments that avoid much cost, as when manufacturers were able to change from hard to bio-degradable detergents.

Lest it seem that the experts live only in the realms of technology and economic balance, consider how definitely some take a clear stand on quality of life, from whatever source or strategy it may come:

> . . . in a world in which we have the means to do almost anything we want, the choice of what to do becomes crucial. . . . In the new world of science and technology 'the ultimate basis of choice is aesthetic. . . .'

And in granting that it takes resources to maintain landscape and amenity, and that it is hard to locate and prove benefits in such endeavors, F. Fraser Darling says that the ecologist's understanding is needed "to retain in urban, suburban, and rural landscapes those dispositions of nature that are apprehended, often subconsciously, by the human being. The connoisseur may enjoy in fuller fashion by knowledge, but subconscious, environmentally induced joy must not be treated with indifference."

This stand in favor of aesthetic values, no matter how hard to measure or allocate, shows up in a quotation from Aldo Leopold, whose words crop up frequently in books on ecology: "Quit thinking about decent land-use as solely an economic problem. Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and esthetically right, as well as economically expedient. A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."

This readiness to take a stand for felt values is apparent, too, in a section on "Landscape and Aesthetic Quality," where R. Burton Litton, Jr., displays a set of photographs explicitly arranged to establish

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qualities in a landscape that can be used to judge its aesthetic value. These values are asserted by means of "propositions" illustrated by distinctive photographs: "Unity can come from spatial limitation." "Vividness, a conspicuous mark of design quality, can come out of form development and contrast."

Another in the "Information and Theory" set of books is *Reason Awake,* a most emphatic assertion of the need for planning, not only in building and landscape but in the ranging endeavors of science itself: "In my judgment," says René Dubos, "social constraints on the scientific enterprise have been made inevitable by the fact that science impinges with increasing effectiveness and violence on all aspects of human life." And he says, ". . . until recent years, all scientists and most laymen had taken for granted the assumption that science was inherently good and that the technologies derived from it constituted the major agents of desirable change and social progress. . . . The public need is now changing . . . technology is forging new shackles for man from which he seems unable to escape."

To Dr. Dubos "the technological utopias now being forecast do not correspond to what people really want." He fears the fast change that comes about for technical reasons without regard for the organic condition; he sees mankind as being slowly evolved and now shaken into disarray: "The man of flesh and bone can maintain physical and mental sanity only to the extent to which he can have direct contact with a certain kind of reality not very different from the conditions under which he evolved." "At present the quality and characteristics of human life are determined more by accidental technological imperatives than governed by chosen values; they are more foisted on man than willed by him . . . our lives are the manifestations of consequences rather than the expressions of purpose."

As in other books rich in slowly matured thought, there comes the quiet voicing of an ultimate doubt, in a quote from Norbert Wiener: "There is a real possibility that changes in our environment have exceeded our capacity to adapt. The real dangers at the present time . . . make one wonder whether we have not changed the environment beyond our capacity to adjust to it, and whether we may not be biologically on the way out."

Dubos warns:

> A society that blindly accepts the decisions of experts is a sick society on its way to death. The time has come when we must produce, alongside specialists, another class of scholars and citizens who have broad familiarity with the facts, methods, and objectives of science and thus are capable of making judgments about scientific policies. Persons who work at the interface of science and society have become essential simply because almost everything that happens in society is influenced by science.

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His most telling evidence for this gap between science and public policy appears in Ritchie Calder's witness that Clement Attlee, who as Prime Minister concurred with President Truman on using the atom bomb, excused himself: "All I knew was that it was a bigger bomb. I knew nothing at all about fall-out, nor the genetic effects. And as far as I know President Truman and Winston Churchill knew nothing of those things either."

The last among the background and theory books, *The Environmental Revolution,* has—as is fitting for its author, Max Nicholson, the long-time chairman of The Nature Conservancy—the best historical account of the worldwide conservation movement, from the Dutch, who have to build the country they then maintain, through the Americans, who had an unspoiled continent needing exploitation for the achieving of wealth, to the British, where wealth from other endeavors was poured into the land, creating estates that for balance and long-term human values are monuments of planning.

The Environmental Revolution is a surprisingly mellow book, among these reports from a troubled vanguard. Mr. Nicholson sees the 1970's as a time when man's interaction with his environment will for the first time be under surveillance, and he even hopes that results of the surveillance will be operative in the management of human affairs. In his most philosophical moments Mr. Nicholson speculates about achieving improved human attitudes as a result of our realization that we face "totally changed requirements of sophisticated living." He is a conservationist with an ambition to use interaction with nature to induce a change in the nature of human beings, to make them viable parts of the changed conditions their technological achievements have made possible.

Finally, the sweep of books on ecology arrives at two lavish picture-and-text volumes that discuss and illustrate planning. Lawrence Halprin, author of *The RSVP Cycles,* is a landscape architect who has designed impressive areas in California and the Northwest. In his book he puts forward a concept called a "score," which essentially is a plan designed from the first to allow for interaction during its performance; the score assumes feedback during the action it inaugurates. The "RSVP" part of the title refers to Resources, Scores, Valuaction (a complex process involving analysis and selectivity while acting), and Performance (the carrying out of whatever is indicated by the score).

Without charts and examples—which are presented with a flare—the concepts may suffer in this summary; Mr. Halprin's results amount to impressive evidence that it all works, at least when carried out with the participation of those enthusiastic for experiment. The book deserves its place amongst ecology texts because of its pervasive intent to ride with nature and give full attention to signals from the environment when setting up scores for men's actions.

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Design with Nature, from its title onward, displays a whole way of entering humbly into the ongoing life around us in our attempts to achieve sustained, pleasant relations with the world. In graphics and in the sweep of its presentation the book is vivid and alive; a background in biology is used throughout; plans are displayed, areas mapped, resources charted and cross-hatched on pictures of zones, mostly on the East Coast, where Mr. McHarg has energetically put his ideas to work.

The energy and ambition demonstrated here is of a kind other than human-centered; McHarg attacks the whole tradition of man as dominant: "It requires a special innocence to delight in the monumental accomplishments of the Renaissance cities, notably Rome and Paris, without appreciating that the generating impulses were more authoritarian than humanitarian—authoritarian towards nature and man.

"If we lower the eyes from the wonderful, strident but innocent assertions of man's supremacy, we can find another tradition, more pervasive than the island monuments, little responsive to the grand procession of architectural styles. This is the vernacular tradition. . . . The farmer is the prototype. He prospers only insofar as he understands the land and by his management maintains its bounty."

In McHarg's book, for all its sweep and energy, there is a wistfulness about the countryside in Scotland he enjoyed when young. Amid big plans for urban centers it is like finding a flower in the pavement to see the organizer of resources valuing feelings that might seem to interfere with production. There is the feeling here, and explicitly on occasion, that man has broken a covenant to exploit a friend, that in so doing he has abandoned something mysteriously essential to his human self.

Even superstitions are seen as safety devices for beings lost in an existence richer than their intelligence can ever fathom, so that "the hunter who believes that all matter and actions are sacramental and consequential will bring deference and understanding to his relations with the environment. He will achieve a steady state with this environment—he will live in harmony with nature and survive because of it."

In McHarg's view, grass will stabilize a dune better than concrete will. Nature is to be "treated as an ally and friend, whose ways must be understood and whose counsel must be respected."

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Address by Chief Seattle

It seems appropriate to us to conclude this special section on "Poetry and Ecology" by quoting in full the now famous address by Chief Seattle (or more correctly, "Seälth"), of the Duwamps tribe, to Governor Isaac Stevens, Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Territory of Washington. The date was December, 1854: Governor Stevens had just proposed to the Indians the terms of a treaty under which they were eventually persuaded to sell two million acres of valuable land for the sum of $150,000. The translator was Dr. Henry A. Smith. The description that follows is taken from Northwest Gateway *by Archie Binns (Doubleday, 1946),*[1] *and is quoted here by permission of the publisher:*

THE GOVERNOR MADE A FINE SPEECH, but he was outranged and outclassed that day. Chief Seattle, who answered on behalf of the Indians, towered a foot above the Governor. He wore his blanket like the toga of a Roman senator, and he did not have to strain his famous voice, which everyone agreed was audible and distinct at a distance of half a mile.

Seattle's oration was in Duwamish. Doctor Smith, who had learned the language, wrote it down; under the flowery garlands of his translation the speech rolls like an articulate iron engine, grim with meanings that outlasted his generation and may outlast all the generations of men. As the amiable follies of the white race become less amiable, the iron rumble of old Seattle's speech sounds louder and more ominous.

Standing in front of Doctor Maynard's office in the stumpy clearing, with his hand on the little Governor's head, the white invaders about him and his people before him, Chief Seattle said:

"Yonder sky that has wept tears of compassion upon my people for centuries untold, and which to us appears changeless and eternal, may change. Today is fair. Tomorrow may be overcast with clouds. My words are like the stars that never change. Whatever Seattle says the great chief at Washington can rely upon with as much certainty as he can upon the return of the sun or the seasons. The White Chief says that Big Chief at Washington sends us greetings of friendship and goodwill. That is kind of him for we know he has little need of our friendship in return. His people are many. They are like the grass that covers vast prairies. My people are few. They resemble the scattering trees of a storm-swept plain. The great, and I presume—good, White Chief sends us word that he wishes to buy our lands but is willing to allow us enough to live comfortably. This indeed appears just, even generous, for the Red Man no longer has rights that he need

[1] Copyright 1941 by Archie Binns.

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respect, and the offer may be wise also, as we are no longer in need of an extensive country. . . . I will not dwell on, nor mourn over, our untimely decay, nor reproach our paleface brothers with hastening it, as we too may have been somewhat to blame.

"Youth is impulsive. When our young men grow angry at some real or imaginary wrong, and disfigure their faces with black paint, it denotes that their hearts are black, and then they are often cruel and relentless, and our old men and old women are unable to restrain them. Thus it has ever been. Thus it was when the white men first began to push our forefathers further westward. But let us hope that the hostilities between us may never return. We would have everything to lose and nothing to gain. Revenge by young men is considered gain, even at the cost of their own lives, but old men who stay at home in times of war, and mothers who have sons to lose, know better.

"Our good father at Washington—for I presume he is now our father as well as yours, since King George has moved his boundaries further north—our great good father, I say, sends us word that if we do as he desires he will protect us. His brave warriors will be to us a bristling wall of strength, and his wonderful ships of war will fill our harbors so that our ancient enemies far to the northward—the Hydas and Tsimpsians—will cease to frighten our women, children, and old men. Then in reality will he be our father and we his children. But can that ever be? Your God is not our God! Your God loves your people and hates mine. He folds his strong and protecting arms lovingly about the paleface and leads him by the hand as a father leads his infant son—but He has forsaken His red children—if they really are his. Our God, the Great Spirit, seems also to have forsaken us. Your God makes your people wax strong every day. Soon they will fill the land. Our people are ebbing away like a rapidly receding tide that will never return. The white man's God cannot love our people or He would protect them. They seem to be orphans who can look nowhere for help. How then can we be brothers? How can your God become our God and renew our prosperity and awaken in us dreams of returning greatness? If we have a common heavenly father He must be partial—for He came to his paleface children. We never saw Him. He gave you laws but He had no word for His red children whose teeming multitudes once filled this vast continent as stars fill the firmament. No; we are two distinct races with separate origins and separate destinies. There is little in common between us.

"To us the ashes of our ancestors are sacred and their resting place is hallowed ground. You wander far from the graves of your ancestors and seemingly without regret. Your religion was written upon tables of stone by the iron finger of your God so that you could not forget. The Red Man could never comprehend nor remember it. Our religion is the traditions of our ancestors—the dreams of our old men, given them in solemn hours of night by the Great Spirit; and the visions of our sachems; and it is written in the hearts of our people.

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"Your dead cease to love you and the land of their nativity as soon as they pass the portals of the tomb and wander way beyond the stars. They are soon forgotten and never return. Our dead never forget the beautiful world that gave them being.

"Day and night cannot dwell together. The Red Man has ever fled the approach of the White Man, as the morning mist flees before the morning sun. However, your proposition seems fair and I think that my people will accept it and will retire to the reservation you offer them. Then we will dwell apart in peace, for the words of the Great White Chief seem to be the words of nature speaking to my people out of dense darkness.

"It matters little where we pass the remnant of our days. They will not be many. A few more moons; a few more winters—and not one of the descendants of the mighty hosts that once moved over this broad land or lived in happy homes, protected by the Great Spirit, will remain to mourn over the graves of a people once more powerful and hopeful than yours. But why should I mourn at the untimely fate of my people? Tribe follows tribe, and nation follows nation, like the waves of the sea. It is the order of nature, and regret is useless. Your time of decay may be distant, but it will surely come, for even the White Man whose God walked and talked with him as friend with friend, cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all. We will see.

"We will ponder your proposition, and when we decide we will let you know. But should we accept it, I here and now make this condition that we will not be denied the privilege without molestation of visiting at any time the tombs of our ancestors, friends and children. Every part of this soil is sacred in the estimation of my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove, has been hallowed by some sad or happy event in days long vanished. . . . The very dust upon which you now stand responds more lovingly to their footsteps than to yours, because it is rich with the blood of our ancestors and our bare feet are conscious of the sympathetic touch. . . . Even the little children who lived here and rejoiced here for a brief season will love these somber solitudes and at eventide they greet shadowy returning spirits. And when the last Red Man shall have perished, and the memory of my tribe shall have become a myth among the White Men, these shores will swarm with the invisible dead of my tribe, and when your children's children think themselves alone in the field, the store, the shop, upon the highway, or in the silence of the pathless woods, they will not be alone. . . . At night when the streets of your cities and villages are silent and you think them deserted, they will throng with the returning hosts that once filled and still love this beautiful land. The White Man will never be alone.

"Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not powerless. Dead, did I say? There is no death, only a change of worlds."

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BETH HARVOR

Pain Was My Portion

THEY ATE THEIR PICNICS as they sat shored up against the graveyard wall—on the living side—with a view down into a far field where there were cows. Even from that distance they could see how the cows' fly-warding tails kept swinging with the languid regularity of bell-ropes, while much closer they could feel, warm and cracked at their backs, the sun-warmed cemetery wall.

Ralph's wife, Gladdie, always held her head high. It came, Ralph said, from an Edwardian childhood of too many blouses with high dog-collared collars, all in starched and unyielding cotton. Ralph had a theory about clothing styles changing the physiognomy of whole generations. "No receding chins in that era," he would say. And he liked to point out to Gladdie how her hair was always seeking its Edwardian beginnings—how no matter how tightly and classically she wound it up on top of her head in the mornings, it still, as the day wore on, worked itself out from its mooring of pins and became more Gibson Girlish. His own hair was in a silver brush-cut, his eyes were military-looking (they looked toughly into a secret distance), his clothes were in restrained colors, except for the one light touch of powder blue sneakers. In fact, most people hadn't even thought they were Americans when they had first come. Not by the way they dressed or talked. They weren't like the ones who came up with their loud plaids with voices to match. The Fraziers, when they wore plaids, wore dark plaids that looked as if they had been steeped in pots of tea, and their specialty-shop sweaters looked as if they had been cut from hairy peat-bogs and had dull pewter buttons on them. And they were not wild pleasure-seekers either; they did research, their own project, supplying information from the gravestones of the Kingston cemetery to the Hampton Historical Society which, in an earlier summer, they had helped to found.

Their place of research was very windy and dry. The trees were too big. What had begun as shelter had ended as deprivation, and the graveyard lay like the environmental equivalent of a pale and over-protected child. It seemed as if the wind never stopped moving in the tops of the big trees—a wind that made the leaves

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fly-cast their spotted shadows across forgotten mounds and faded grass. But the Fraziers had been gradually changing all that. Even after heavy rains had pelted the graves with leaves ("Like walking in wet cornflakes," Gladdie said), they were sometimes to be seen there, in milky plastic raincoats, gathering more evidence to help in the reconstruction of the history of the early community, kneeling to their researches like supplicants, tenderly feeling along the fronts of stones through crude pock-marks and embossed granite-colored moss to find clues to names and dates. "A kind of braille in reverse," Gladdie called the incised letters. And on fine days they sometimes did charcoal rubbings. There was one verse that Gladdie particularly loved, one that she had made rubbings of for the kitchens of all her Boston friends:

PAIN WAS MY PORTION
PHYSIC WAS MY FOOD
CHRIST WAS MY PHYSICIAN
WHICH DID ME NO GOOD

They marvelled at the anger and the humour of it. "Anger turned to humour," Ralph said, "by the alchemy of rhyme."

The early graves belonged mainly to United Empire Loyalist dead. That great exodus had long since reversed itself and gone back the way it came; now there was only the most irregular travel from south to north—made up of big loud prodigal sons who came to "Canader for the summah, Florider for the wintah," and who lived in places like Boston and Springfield in between; or there were the tourists who came up to the northeast coast of the continent for a quick change of country and a slightly cooler climate; or there were the draft dodgers and deserters whom the Fraziers didn't like to think about. They didn't approve of the war their government was fighting *either,* but they didn't think that dodging the draft should be necessary in a country that had universal suffrage. "*Universal suffrage?*" someone had cried, and when someone else had pointed out to them—and it was a Canadian who had pointed it out—that a boy could be shipped back home, neatly tucked in his coffin and wrapped in flags, long before he was ever old enough to vote, they had to agree; and when someone else, another Canadian (the Canadians were getting

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just as argumentative as the people back home) pointed out that the Loyalists had *also* been draft dodgers, the Fraziers had to agree again, but still *emotionally* they preferred those draft dodgers of the past, who had left their Georgian legacies along all the richest river valleys. A Canadian neighbor they had once been fond of made the mistake of saying that as a raison d'etre for not fighting in a war, the Fraziers preferred King to conscience. In self-defense the Fraziers decided that this man had become bitter and cynical. And so they continued annually to resolve their difficulties by trying to live, for the summer months of every year, not only in another country, but in another century of another country. Their summer house was an early Loyalist one which they had got cheaply and restored expensively—though simply. Ralph would occasionally remark that it cost a lot to live such a simple life—as he scoured the countryside for early maple and butternut cabinets to use as fronts for electric dishwashers and hi-fi equipment. In fact, the twentieth century ran through the house in hidden veins of pipes and wires, not talked about, but *there,* like a crude word for a functional thing. On the surface though, everything was "period," they had found a Boston store that carried black and brown gingham wall-papers and fabrics of early prints. They had found early glass for the windows and early brick for the stairs, so that even if they suffered from astigmatism as they looked out at the brilliant mornings, even if they felt as if the stairs would crumble beneath them as they ran down into the brilliant mornings, they could still assure themselves that the reproduction they lived in was a faithful one.

Marian was their only child and had been born late in their marriage. She was a sad-necked girl with long, weakly gold hair and poor eyesight. Gladdie didn't like glasses (she was a tyrant for the natural) and she would frequently lift the glasses from the face of her pale helpless-eyed Botticelli daughter and advise her to go to her room and practice her eye exercises. When the eye exercises didn't seem to make an improvement, she thought of various compromises—having the glasses attached to black velvet reins, or to a chain of braided human hair so that they could hang down on the front of the bosom (*"What bosom?"* Marian had asked) and be swung up to the eyes in times of emergency. Marian, who still had a small guilty residue of respect for the

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opinion of her peers, carried the glasses in the pocket of her jeans. Gladdie didn't care about Marian's peers. Or their opinions. The ones in Boston were too fast; the ones in Hampton were too dull. In fact, what connection these empty-eyed teenagers had with their salty keen-eyed grandparents, Gladdie simply could not see. In two generations—and in some cases, one—all the naturalness had been drained from these people; she could not imagine any robust haystack sex preceding the large annual yield of illegitimate babies; instead, she thought of the girls lying obedient and dull as cows in the backs of cars, their white thighs flopped open, their eyes looking up at nothing, even at the height of the act, chewing gum. Chewing cuds! (When Ralph listened to Gladdie lamenting the passing of robust haystack sex, he kept his mouth shut. A gentleman never tells, he thought, giving that old saw a new, piquant, and strangely opposite meaning, for only he was in the unfortunate position of knowing that Gladdie's sexuality was locked back in the eighteenth century—like her taste.) And the clothes they wore! Gladdie went on. She had seen them at the Saturday night dance wearing rhinestone imitations of the Queen of England's necklaces (and the Queen of England's taste was certainly nothing to stand up and cheer about) and dresses made from maroon taffeta with a large grain in it like plywood. Their teeth had potato-eyes in them from what she imagined to be a constant diet of root beer and lime rickey—that is, the ones who *had* their teeth, for it was their collective ambition (and probably, Gladdie thought, the only ambition they had ever had) to have all their teeth pulled out by the time that they were twenty. She averted her eyes from them in embarrassment and pain—she loved "character" and "naturalness," and she tried to make Marian see how wrong they would be as friends. "But what about the kids in Boston?" Marian had asked. "*They're* natural." And she thought of the kids of Boston, the girls without make-up and wearing long hair and faded pants. Or else they wore short calico dresses, demure, high-necked, smocked. Gladdie saw red when she thought of those cocoa, blue and slate-colored dresses that were made of calico patterns appropriated from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and cut off at thigh length. They reminded her, she said, of Georgian houses cut down into ranch style. And this was how

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she won all the arguments. With her perfect taste and her feeling for the authentic. "And the kids in Boston have no *character*," Gladdie told Marian. "They have poor posture and no ambition." And so Marian, who also had poor posture and no ambition, went everywhere with her parents: to timeless afternoon teas with two old sisters who lived in a high old house at the helm of a large loose garden, to the sour parlours of people too proud to go to nursing homes, to endless mornings on the sunken verandahs of the town characters, for long country drives hunting down Canadiana, on picnics, and to the graveyard near Kingston.

Marian's memories of the graveyard were both peaceful and bizarre. Most of her childhood seemed to have been spent there among its moss-mottled stones and she could remember strange (strange because so casual) meals eaten at a large family gravestone made in the shape of a table, accommodating at least six people above ground and what appeared to be a whole dynasty below. She seemed to remember ham sandwiches being carefully divided out over IN LOVING MEMORY OF, and milk spilled on dark eroded stone, and the careful recording of how long the people had lived, how long outwitted a cruel fate, not just the pathetically meager years only, but often the more generous months and days as well. But then with Marian memory often lacked the quality of an accurate recording of events, and seemed sometimes to be imagination in retrospect.

But as the years passed by, the Fraziers spent less time in the Kingston graveyard. Their passion for Loyalist statistics gradually became sated, they became preoccupied with the restoration of their house, and they often had long visits from American friends.

The summer Marian was fourteen, Esther Abrams came to visit. None of the Fraziers had ever met her before she came, but they felt as if they had known her for years for she was the sister of one of their oldest friends, Helen Helpmann. They had got a letter from Helen early in July asking if it would be all right if she and Esther arrived the following week. Esther was sick, Helen wrote, so they were taking the plane rather than the train for reasons of comfort. Also to save time: for Helen also wrote that the doctor had given Esther four—at the most, five—more months to live. The Fraziers rose to the challenge of this

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disheartening news, terribly aware of its irony. They had wanted for years to meet Esther, and now at last their wish was going to be granted, and they would all meet, only to know that they would never meet again. It had the boomerang quality, the malevolent charity with which wishes are granted in fairy-tales, and Gladdie lamented for Esther, for Esther's husband, for Helen, for themselves, as she cheered up the room at the top of the stairs. She rounded up the brightest colored cushions from the other bedrooms and unpacked the red and white quilt made by the Ladies' Aid. She took down "Pain was My Portion." She took down a Currier & Ives engraving called "The Farewell" and put a Dufy poster in its place. She imagined the kinds of flowers she would pick, not the heavy-scented creamy ones like peonies and roses, but molecular peppery ones—Queen Anne's Lace, caraway, lupins—and vigorous ones—tiger lillies, Devil's Paintbrushes—all gathered into gay improbable bouquets. She took Marian aside and explained about the cancer, that it was incurable, that Esther Abrams herself knew that she was going to die.

"We will try to make it a very happy visit, dear, and I want you to know the facts about it so you don't start talking about cancer or dying or anything like that."

And then, propelled by her own kind of tense bustle, she was off to the clothesline with a pan of washing. Marian came down the steps after her, and stood watching.

"Where is it, Mother?"

"Where's what?"

"The cancer."

Gladdie pegged the last sheet to the line, then rolled the pulley out. It was one of her limitations that she frequently found the truth to be in bad taste. "There is nothing they can do," she said, hoping *that* would do.

"But *where* is it?"

"Last year she had a breast removed," Gladdie said in a far-off voice; "they thought they had got it all out, but they didn't."

Marian continued to stand there, waiting.

The sheets, filled with wind, moved in solemn columns.

"There's nothing more to *tell,*" Gladdie said sharply; "go to your room now, and tidy it up."

Much as they may have felt prepared for Esther, the Fraziers were all surprised by her. She seemed so incredibly alive, and for

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a woman who had only four months to live, she seemed very sure of herself. And she had big breasts. Marian was cross with herself when she realized how much this surprised her. Surely she hadn't expected her to come with one half of her bosom limp and flat like a war-amputee with his empty flat sleeve tucked into his pocket. How stupid can you be! she thought sternly to herself. Still, she found herself keeping her eyes carefully averted from Esther Abram's breasts, and even from her face.

"Dear, *try* to be a little more *natural,*" her mother said to her one afternoon, giving her a fiercely reassuring smile.

"Yes, Mother," Marian said, sighing heavily, walking up the stairs,—Yes mother, yesmother, yesmother, yesmother.

She did soon become more relaxed, though. It was Esther who did it. She put them all at their ease, all of them, even Marian. "She's remarkable!" Gladdie and Helen were constantly reminding each other, in their new, low, charged voices, even when they could see Esther through the kitchen window far off in the field picking wild flowers, even when they knew she was far away at the beach, they spoke in their new low voices. They would do anything not to be her, anything. Bestow any praise, renounce any pleasure. They spent their days conspiring diversions: trips, picnics, bonfires, charades. And Esther tried not to be one of those tiresome invalids who never needs anything done for her. She allowed herself to need almost everything, the hot toddies at night, the warm pine baths in the late afternoon, the wild batik of Gladdie's made up into an amusing dressing-gown, the impulsive flights into town to see the grade B movies that they snorted over like demented teen-agers, the back-rubs, the rests after lunch. And Gladdie put a great deal of love and care into the meals. Breakfast was made to be Edwardian-ample with omelets and bread dipped into egg-nog and fried, with Scottish marmalades, English jams, Oriental and South American teas. Sometimes they let breakfast go on for hours. They told a lot of stories and laughed a lot and were afraid of silences. Every breakfast was distinguished by the desperate gaiety of the Titanic going down. It was as if they were trying to pretend they could control time, but in the end, thought Marian, anxious to go swimming, they only wasted it.

Marian came to idolize Esther. "Esther down yet?" was the first thing she would say when she came down to breakfast in the

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mornings, and "Where's Esther?" when she came in from swimming in the afternoon,—"Esther in?" Gladdie and Helen both noticed how Marian adored Esther. And one day when Gladdie was puttering in her room, Marian came by. She was on her way to the neighbors to get some eggs. She needed money from her mother, got it, then hesitated a moment. Gladdie was wearing a sensible black bathing suit, but she was one of those fortunate people on whom the sensible looks classic.

"What is it?" she asked her daughter. Marian had been looking pale lately, she thought.

"I was wondering."

"What is it? What were you wondering?"

"Something about Esther."

Gladdie listened for a moment, in the direction of downstairs, with her eyes.

"Are they all out?"

Marian nodded.

"Well?"

"I was wondering what kind of padding she puts in it—I mean in the other half of her brassiere."

Gladdie looked shocked. Looking shocked was a ploy she had occasionally used with children. All parents do, she imagined. Nice people don't ask such things, her look said.

"Oh well," said Marian, defeated, "I just wondered . . . ," and she went down the hall and slowly descended the stairs in a series of sad little hops.

"Marian." Her mother's voice, behind and above her. Her mother was standing on the landing. Her high blades of cheekbones looked polished—she must have been creaming her face. She towered there at the stair top, an icon in a channel swimmer's bathing-suit. And, "She has a kind of foam-rubber pad built into her brassiere," she said, quickly, like a child saying something she's been dared to. And at that moment the broad handsome planes of her face fragmented, buckled-up, became the terrible terrain of fear, of terror. She jerked her face away from Marian so that her own daughter would not see the shame of her fear, and went quickly down the hallway to her room.

Marian fitted the money into her pocket and just before she stepped out into the sun, she cupped her hands under her own

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small breasts. Then she deftly darted her blouse into her shorts and started off for the next farm. Lately she had begun to wake up at night, needing to use the toilet. She didn't try to discover why (too much cocoa? too few blankets?) and so prevent its recurrence; she only stumbled, bewildered but dutiful, downstairs to the bathroom, then upstairs again and at once back to sleep. One night though, she made the mistake of trying to orient the sky to the night (is it near morning? she wondered) and she made her way through wicker mounds to one of the sunporch windows. It had turned cold for summer and although the hills around the house were dark, the sky was not very dark, it was medium blue. But cold. And speckled with stars. Everyone's asleep, she thought, the living and the dying. Those words "the living and the dying" came to her without warning and they filled her with such immediate and spontaneous terror that her only thought then was to get upstairs as fast as she could, and she fled to the stairway. And all the way up it was as if a powerful hand was clutching for her ankle, filling her legs with tremors so that thrills of terror ran down them, so that they seemed to have no more consistency than running water, like legs in dreams. At last she got to her room, got the door closed tight behind her, stood leaning hard against it, everything roaring and pounding inside her. "Ideas rose up in crowds," she thought, remembering a line from a book in her father's study. And that quickly turned into "ideas rose up in shrouds." She had always been able to terrorize herself by rhyme. And she had kept the light on till morning that night; it wasn't till the sun rose and began to fill her room with pallid early life that she had finally fallen asleep.

A few days before Esther and Helen were due to leave, Gladdie got saddled with some kind of committee meeting at her house, and she suggested that the two of them go off for a drive and take Marian along as their guide. "Esther looks tired," Gladdie said in a low voice to Helen. Esther, coming down the stairs in a dark wool skirt and a blue sweater, did not look especially tired, but there was, among the others, almost a ritual of anticipating exhaustion on her behalf. Marian ran up to her room for her cardigan, and when she came down again the three of them set off on the north-bound road out of Hampton. Sussex, "the dairy-center of the Maritimes" according to the map, did not par-

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ticularly entice them, and soon after they left Hampton they turned left and took the road down the Kingston Peninsula. Marian suggested they visit the old Merritt-Wetmore house, now restored, and once the home of one of the first Loyalist families in the district. Tea was served there too, Marian said. It had started to rain. They decided to go to the Merritt-Wetmore house. The black car moved under a roof of dripping leaves and came, beaded with black rain, out into the open near Kingston.

They found the house and looked around and had their tea. When they came back to the car, there was a long glaring underbelly to the navy sky—did it mean more rain or did it mean clearing? It had turned cold, it seemed like a day in October. They got into the car and started out toward Hampton.

"What church is that?"

"The Kingston Anglican church. We can turn left here, if you'd like to see it."

Helen turned left and they soon swung in beside it. Their thighs felt stuck together, their legs stiff. They got out. It was curious, Marian thought, she had not been down here since last year, and now the church looked dilapidated, blotched with rain. The paint had mostly worn off, what was left was flaky silver, and the stained glass windows, so gaudy from the inside, only looked black from the outside, and a little rough, like black water the wind had lightly blown over.

They went inside. In there it smelled of the sweet damp of an old and closed building. It had some hideous bits all right (the Victorian windows donated in advance by wealthy parishoners in memory of themselves, for instance), but on the whole it was a beautiful building. "Preserved in a state of original sin through lack of funds for modernization," was what Ralph always said about it, adding that he would contribute only to its upkeep, but never to its renovation. He had even composed a small prayer that contained the words, "Preserve us, O Lord, from marbled arbourite and chrome." Marian quoted this, and the two women smiled. They came outside, blinking in the strange after-rain light.

Marian led them into the churchyard and showed them the tombstone with the angel smoking a pipe, and the lovely sentimental ones with weeping willows, and the ones with shapely

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limp hands laid over roses. Then there were the six little Elizabeths all in a row, all daughters of one of the early ministers of the church. It was a rather terrifying case of stubborn optimism, Marian explained. He had named his first daughter Elizabeth and when she had died as an infant, the second-born child had been named after her, and so on right through the sixth birth and death. A man who had refused to be intimidated by omens, and who had lost. That was how Ralph had put it, anyway. And at the end of the row was the father's own grave and the grave of his wife who, after such an orgy of tragedy, had also died young. Marian took them to the knoll where the tombstone in the shape of a table was, and she pointed out to them the four table legs made in the shape of burial urns, then she led them down into the lower reaches where she found and read aloud the inscription beginning "Pain was my portion." After a little searching she was also able to locate the grave of the Wetmore who had built the house they had visited earlier in the afternoon.

"Well! And where all did you go?" Ralph asked as they sat down to supper that night. Helen said that they had gone down the peninsula and had visited the Merritt-Wetmore house. And she immediately launched into a discussion of the house and its chairs: Hitchcock, thumb-back, Acadien. Marian was waiting for a chance to add that they had also visited the Kingston church, and was just on the point of saying so when it suddenly struck her: she shouldn't have taken Esther there! Oh God, don't let Helen tell Mother, was all Marian could think, all through the meal, please God, please God, please.

And that night she watched them, kneeling to her low bedroom window. She was wearing one of her mother's long satin nightgowns—this one had insets of beige lace and a beige lace butterfly appliquéd on it close to the ankle. Not for her the baby-doll pyjamas of her peers. And down below her, down in the garden, down by the pond where the singing of the frogs was like beeps from outer space, the two women, Gladdie and Helen, walked, their arms linked, murmuring like doves in their houndstooth checked slacks. She wondered what they were saying, but all the same she was grateful that she didn't have to know.

The day that Esther and Helen left was one of tense ebullience. Ralph and Gladdie had anticipated, they felt, all the emotional

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snags, and with a loving cunning circumvented them all. They had got presents for both but the presents had been hidden in the car to be saved for the airport—for the last ten minutes before take-off. They presented Helen with hers first: a buxom velvet box. "Oh you shouldn't have—" she had already started to say, before opening it, and when she did undo the clasp, expecting, as she later said, "a diamond necklace at the very least," a jack-in-the-box green monster leaped out, causing all the grown-ups to shriek and roar till tears streamed down their faces. It was Esther who in the end got the necklace—a nice silver one, simple and tasteful (but that's what people say about gravestones, Gladdie thought, struck with horror)—for they had decided against liquor or perfume since both so obviously lacked permanence, and the necklace was given Esther in an immense cardboard carton. She had to go through what appeared to be a year's supply of newspapers to reach it at the bottom and this caused more hilarity, and a general need for drinks. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet," Ralph said ringingly, when his wife, according to plan, expressed a desire for drink, and he pulled a thermos up from the picnic basket, and some paper cups. "The man who thinks of everything," he said, handing the cups around. He even gave one to Marian. "Learn now, pay later," he said, although "Fly now, die later," was the horrible counter-slogan which hovered immediately unbidden in his mind. The drink was quite weak, concocted to get them over the worst, but not of a strength to start crying-jags.

Esther did not die in four months after all, or in five. After she had got back to Seattle she was put on a new drug which for a while seemed to hold her disease stable—for a while she even seemed to improve, but toward the end of winter whatever hold the new drug had had weakened, and she was put into the hospital. Her husband and Helen and Helen's husband spent many hours of every day there with her, for her condition was now so serious that there were no visitors' restrictions. The room seemed to Helen like a starched white apron seen through a thick lens; white light hitting so much white linen and bouncing off and welling round so many glass and chromium fittings. The only human thing about it was the smell of dying, not quite hidden under the

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stepped-up smell of ointment and flowers. And Esther was like a child in her johnny-shirt—sickness and institutions had brought out the waif in her—and yet not like a child at all, but like a figurehead, a woman at the prow of her pain. It was only in the movement of the legs that the pain showed, her legs were restless in the bed, always bending and straightening and bending again, forever moving in the small sea of her bed, as if through the agency of her legs she was trying to dissipate her pain. And so up there, in the top of the hospital, in Esther's glass and chromium shrine, the level in the intravenous bottle kept dropping like the level of sand in an hour-glass—even that, even the intravenous which was supposed to prolong her life, reminding them, with every drop, how her life was running out.

That summer the Fraziers went to Hampton as usual. While they were there, early in July, a letter came from Seattle. Gladdie opened it, then went immediately into the back garden to find Ralph.

"Ralph!" she called in an urgent disintegrating voice, "Ralph!" He turned and saw her face, her eyes like flags of pain. "Esther?" She nodded and he came to her and took her in his arms. After a little while they went in to make themselves tea, then carried the luke-warm cups, shaking in their saucers, out to the garden. They cried as they drank. Even when you expected it, it was still terrible.

"Poor Marian, I hope she doesn't take it too hard."

"Where is she?"

"Gone into town. To the store."

"Well maybe you'd better go to meet her; that way she'll know something's up."

But Marian, turning into the long laneway from the main road saw only that her mother was coming to meet her. She didn't know that something was up. She waved to Gladdie. Gladdie raised her arm in a stiff salute, then let it fall abruptly to her side.

"I think I remembered everything!" Marian called.

Gladdie came up to Marian and took her free arm and without saying anything began to walk with her.

"Something's wrong," Marian said, after a few minutes.

"We got a letter from Helen. Esther's . . . gone."

Marian didn't cry after all. All afternoon her parents kept

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plying themselves with tea, kept reaching over and clasping hands, kept looking, Marian thought, like thunderstruck spaniels. Finally she took a walk to the field and took a book with her. And for a long time she sat up on the field hill, stubble piercing her bum, trying to remember what Esther looked like. But she could call forth no clear image of Esther. The shock of a sudden visual image hadn't jelled; maybe she'd looked at Esther too steadily instead of being surprised into remembering her. There were so many other things she *could* remember. She could remember how on the first day Esther had come and they were showing her her room, how off and on all that afternoon wide bands of dark had been moving down across the hills whenever clouds crossed the sun. And while they'd been showing it to her, Esther's room was suddenly steeped in dark. Then everyone had started to talk at once, a bad sign, always, and then, after what had seemed forever—ten seconds? fifteen?—the sun had come out again, and the lace-like flowers seemed made of sun and fire, and the red and white quilt from the Ladies' Aid shone out with its ritual backwoods geometry. "What a marvellous room," Esther had said, taking it all in. And then Marian remembered how sometimes when she had been younger and they had been doing research at the Kingston graveyard (her father, her mother, herself) how sometimes there would have been a new death, a fresh grave, and they would never work near it, wanting to keep their distance from it, with its harsh green raffia square of fake grass on it, not color-coordinated to the real grass but looking like a scatter-rug on the great tawny dried-up floor of the cemetery.

Supper that night was late. It was a convalescents' supper—more tea of course, and cold leftovers from the fridge. Every man for himself. Gladdie was feeling very upset about Marian's lack of sorrow. She remembered what Helen had told her about Marian taking her and Esther to the Kingston cemetery and dragging them over every inch of consecrated ground. An exhaustive guided tour of the dead. And a strange business too. The phrase "psychiatric help" had been mentioned between them, rather tentatively at the time. Now Gladdie looked at her daughter with shrewd anxiety.

Marian helped with the supper dishes, then said she was going upstairs to bed. It was late to be finishing dishes, after ten. "I seem to have lost all sense of time," Gladdie said, leaning into her hus-

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band's embrace. He kept patting her on the back. As if losing all sense of time was some sort of achievement. Marian, making no comment, and no comment was disapproval enough, climbed the stairs. Through the open window she could hear how the eleven- and twelve-year-olds were singing down on the beach. They were singing "Red Sails in the Sunset," dragging the words so slowly over the melody that the melody was lost almost entirely. In another year or two they would be able to go to the Saturday night dances and dance to it. "Red Sails in the Sunset" was what was always played for the final dance of the night. "A dirge in three-quarter time," was what Ralph usually called it, trying to make Marian feel better about not being one of the crowd. Walking along the upstairs hall, Marian could hear the singing quite clearly, all the way up from the beach.

Gladdie soon detached herself from Ralph and went up the stairs. "Marian?" she said, outside her door. "Okay if I come in for a minute?" Oh it was hard, raising daughters. Hard.

"Sure."

Marian was sitting on her bed, unbuttoning her blouse. What a closed expression her face has! Gladdie thought, alarmed.

"Marian."

"Yes, Mother?"

"Esther was very fond of you."

Like a vulture for grief, her mother seemed to her now, with her bright prominent eyes fixed on her in a hard assessing way.

"Yes, I know."

But Marian couldn't cry. Gladdie stood in the doorway a little longer, then it became awkward, her being there, and neither of them saying anything. "Good-night, then." But I am disappointed in you, her eyes said.

"Good-night, Mum."

After Gladdie had left, Marian folded her blouse and shorts and put them on a chair. Then she leaned over and unhooked her brassiere, a precious extra thing to put on and take off (since last month). As its straps slid down her arms, she suddenly felt the most intense burning pain in her throat. She lay down, pulled the sheet up to her armpits, then lay still as a statue on the catafalque of her bed. The moonlight drained her arms of tan. And her long burning painful column of neck kept separating her stony head from her anguished heart.

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JOHN SIMON

Grotowski's Grotesqueries

THERE IS A NAME IN THE THEATRE OF our time that is more prestigious than any other. It is perhaps more of an incantation than a name, and even more than an incantation, a magic formula. It is the words "Jerzy Grotowski," the name of the founder and director of the Polish Laboratory Theatre of Wroclaw. I remember when, as judge at the Yale Dramat's Festival of College Drama (or whatever the thing is called), I was accosted by a lanky youth from a Midwestern university. He wore dungarees and paratrooper's boots, and spoke in a manner unburdened by literacy. Where, he wanted to know, could he read about Jerzy Grotowski? When I mentioned the *Tulane Drama Review*, he said, somewhat impatiently, that he had read all that, of course; where could he get more? I suggested a trip to Poland, and he earnestly replied that, if he could only afford it, he'd go. I realized then that the theatre had acquired its own guru, its *magister ludi*, on a par with Marcuse and McLuhan, and one who, unlike Strasberg, transcended national boundaries.

Last fall, there appeared in the Sunday *Times* an ad, no more than a quarter page in size, heralding the coming of Jerzy Grotowski to the Brooklyn Academy of Music. I am told that people who sent in checks no later than the following Monday were informed that their requests could not be met; those who did get their tickets apparently sent for them that very Sunday, or even the night before, when the paper hit the stands. No one but the Mage of Wroclaw could have produced such an effect. Of course, the number of spectators for Grotowski's productions is very small: sometimes no greater than forty; never over a hundred. The opening night was instinct with confusion. Grotowski had found the facilities in Brooklyn unsuited to his stagings, and at the eleventh hour shifted his activities to a Greenwich Village church with removable pews. Many people were unaware of the change of location; moreover, the starting time was announced one way on the tickets (which, incidentally, looked more like illustrations for some ancient book on magic than tickets, and also conveniently listed the telephone number of the Laboratory Theatre in Wroclaw, in case one wished to make inquiries) and another way in the *Times*. So the chosen few waited expectantly and long for the stragglers from Brooklyn to arrive. It was found, however, that the Brooklyn Academy had oversold tickets, and the excess ticketholders, who were rigorously excluded, proceeded to bang away vengefully on the church door, as if they were nailing on it at least ninety-five theses. These people were later ac-

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commodated at additional performances, which, alas, made Grotowski cancel his Los Angeles engagement, leaving deprived West Coasters without even a church door on which to take out their frustrations.

The opening bill was Grotowski's adaptation of Juliusz Słowacki's, the nineteenth-century Polish romantic poet's, adaptation of Calderón's *The Constant Prince*. For it, the audience is seated on two tiers along three sides of an oblong playing area: one tier may be six feet above the arena; the other, ten. Ushers led the long-waiting folk to seats on one of the two levels of planks, and fitted each arriving behind into a little space of board by peremptorily directing other behinds to huddle closer together. Everyone was in his seat, which on opening night legitimately, and later on the black market, cost up to $100, a trifle high for an enterprise that calls itself "the Poor Theatre." A few executives of the sponsoring Brooklyn Academy were standing inconspicuously at the back of the upper tier, but were promptly driven from the temple at Grotowski's behest. The Master was present, as at all performances, watching and occasionally making some small adjustment, such as shifting one of the two spotlights a little. He is a piece of walking chiaroscuro: a pudgy expanse of very pale face punctuated by blackish glasses (for an eye ailment, we are told); below this, a sizable stretch of black suit separated from the equally black tie by a white shirt. This is the *ne varietur* uniform, and suggests a cross between a secular priest and a hieratic IBM executive.

Ellen Stewart, the eponymous director of the LaMama Theatre and a co-sponsor of Grotowski's visit, toured the bleachers and walked around the arena, whether to survey or for display, I cannot tell. The off-Broadway reviewer of *The New Yorker* dropped her notebook into the acting pit with a moderate thud. A dread hush fell on the already cowed audience. Was this the signal for the beginning? Or some act of *lèse majesté* for which the offender would be promptly punished? Finally, the play began, and lasted, like all these Grotowski productions, a therapeutic fifty-five-minute hour; Calderón's version must take at least three times that long, but may well seem shorter.

The five men and one woman in the cast cavort, contort, skip, wallow, prance and dance about. They shrill or rattle off words, unintelligibly even for Poles; they sound like human hurdy-gurdies, whining, shrieking, chanting, howling. The only piece of scenery is a slant-topped slab of wood on which a prisoner is stripped, castrated, and admitted to the group; then another prisoner, the Prince, is brought in. All in white, he is stripped to a white loincloth and tortured by the others who wear absurd black costumes—a mixture of styles and periods including togas, berets, a cardboard crown, an umbrella, a red cloak that at one point becomes a bullfighter's mantle in a mock corrida. The umbrella, like all Grotowskian props, also undergoes metamorphoses; it is all suggestive of kids discovering a trunk full of old clothes and horsing around in them. The gentle and Christlike Prince

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does not give in to his tormentors who, by their grotesque millings, hoppings and mumblings around him, supposedly convey that they are as impressed and reverent of him as they are envy- and hate-ridden.

The performers split into little groups and bound and gesticulate about in amorphous imitations of modern dance. They strut, leap and yell in various distorted voices. Much of the shouting is done into the plywood walls or, prone, into the floorboards. There is no attempt at maintaining character: just after the Prince has been tortured, he turns into a living wind machine and provides wind sounds to which the others can be buffeted about. The Prince is finally killed, but his spirit (or, in this windy context, more accurately perhaps, his breath) conquers his slayers. I cannot give a more detailed account because (a) hanging over the railing and sandwiched in between bodies, I was in no position to take notes; and (b) I was so dumbfounded by the infantilism and coarseness of the proceedings that sheer amazement kept me from even trying.

The next production was *Akropolis,* based on a 1904 play by Stanisław Wyspiański. In the original, the action takes place at Cracow Cathedral and the Royal Castle, which together form a kind of Polish Acropolis. On the eve of the Day of the Resurrection, figures from the Bible and Greek mythology out of the Cathedral tapestries and Castle statuary come to life; their appearance here makes the place into "the Necropolis of the Tribes." In the end, Christ-Apollo is resurrected and leads a triumphal procession that spells the redemption of both Poland and Europe. Grotowski has transposed the action to another necropolis —the Auschwitz death camp. It is now the inmates who act out various biblical and mythological scenes by way of a temporary reprieve from the horror of the camp. Finally they all disappear under a scrapheap they themselves have built up on the stage—the crematorium—and a matter-of-fact voice is heard saying: "They are gone, and the smoke rises in spirals."

For this production, the audience was scattered in small handfuls fitted in among the platforms of the irregularly shaped playing area; slightly larger groups were around the fringes of it; the rest were up in the balcony, but on only two of the balcony's three sides. For no other reason, presumably, than so as not to exceed the mystic figure for attendance Grotowski has prescribed. On the center platform there was a goodly stack of sections of stovepipe. Above the platforms, a network of ropes. A beat-up iron bathtub and a battered wheelbarrow could also be discerned. The actors appear in costumes made of sacks with holes in them, the holes lined with material suggesting torn flesh. On the feet, ungainly wooden shoes that make a fearful clatter; on the heads, berets. Between periods of slave labor, the prisoners perform their biblical and Homeric scenes involving the stories of Laban, Jacob, Esau and Rachel (including Jacob's combat with the Angel), and the love of Paris and Helen, the prophecy of Cassandra. It is all in

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grotesque distortion: a prisoner, from time to time, plays cacophonous versions of popular songs on a creaky violin, and the scenes are acted out in a similarly grotesque, ear-assaulting fashion. The death of Laban is the murder of one prisoner by another; the marriage of Jacob and Rachel is a procession following a prisoner clutching a piece of pipe bedizened with a rag for a wedding-veil; the love duet of Helen and Paris is performed by two male prisoners cooing at each other while the rest jeer at them; the combat with the Angel has one prisoner, Jacob, kneeling and holding up with his back the wheelbarrow in which another, the Angel, lies with his head hanging toward the floor. The Angel bangs the floor with his head and tries unsuccessfully to kick Jacob's head with his boots; Jacob cannot shake the wheelbarrow off his shoulders. We are to understand that they are two prisoners nailed to the same instrument of torture.

A little reflection will show that all this, apart from its obvious ugliness, is nonsense. For if the prisoners were enacting visions that are supposed to fill them with hope and a sense of the transcendent, they would not portray them as ghastly travesties. If, on the other hand, the prisoners are jeering at their cultural and spiritual heritage, their actions become a grim charade so nihilistic that no one would bother enacting it in the shadow of death. Grotowski has confused—inadvertently or deliberately—the horrible experiences of prisoners with their hopeful fantasies; the result is not harrowing enough to convey the death-camp experience, and sheds no new light on it; even less is it able to express the persistence of human dignity and imagination, for which task it lacks poetry. But, someone is sure to say, why this insistence on historic or psychological *verismo,* or even verbal poetry? Why shouldn't Grotowski amalgamate the agonies and aspirations of the inmates into an image that subsumes both? Has not Grotowski written of an "element in our productions variously called 'collision with the roots,' 'the dialectics of mockery and apotheosis,' or even 'religion expressed through blasphemy; love speaking out through hate' "? The answer to that is, as always when facile symbol-mongering is at work, that you have to make your scenic event credible on some basic level before you can expect it to function on a higher plane; that this skipping of the base of the pyramid for the sake of the apex is bound to produce castles in the air. For me, *Akropolis* produced only one effect—of studied repulsiveness, which made the incineration of these creatures come none too soon.

I reproduce some notes scribbled on my program during the performance. "Prisoner bangs floor five times with head. Hissing sounds from cast. A prisoner bangs various pipes with a stick and declaims through them. Cast brays. Soft singsong by woman prisoner at one end of acting area; antiphonal choir from others at far end. Love talk of two men, regularly interrupted by gales of sneering laughter. Two men recite in low, croaking voices; woman interrupts with little pigeon

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cooings. Woman does weird pushups, dances around, tears at clothes, is bent double from time to time and ululates pathetically. [The Cassandra scene.] They stand, back to back, in a double file of three, one man on their shoulders, chanting and gesticulating. This turns into a howl. They enact what looks like the turning on of the gas: they face in different directions, some sitting, some bending over and clutching their outfits at the neck; all are shrieking or praying or keening. They stumble up the platform in a wavering line, lift a dummy off the ropes, stagger around with arms uplifted, chanting and howling. This is interrupted by one of them doing a coy little *sotto voce* recitation. General screaming. All disappear through trap door, whence more chanting and a few words."

This, I submit, is how it strikes one if one doesn't speak Polish (as most of Grotowski's admirers don't), but Poles I know have assured me that they too find it hard if not impossible to make out the words. When the prisoners go about nailing down pieces of pipe to the floor, or hanging up other pieces from the ropes above—or when they suspend themselves or one another from these ropes—brutality does come through clearly enough, a brutality, however, that I never found moving. As Robert Brustein sees it, "Grotowski operates on the anti-pleasure principle. His work is profoundly sadomasochistic, in the manner of the imitation of the Passion of Christ—flagellating and painful both for actors and audiences."

In the third bill, *Apocalypsis cum Figuris,* the two spotlights are side by side on the floor, the stage is the entire floor space of the Church, the actors are dressed in bizarre, mostly white, parodistic outfits, and their shadows are projected all over the walls. The audience of forty sit along two walls on narrow benches. The piece is a retelling of the Christ story, with the Christ figure enacted by the Simpleton (shades of Kazantzakis), the other actors assuming the roles of Peter, Judas, John (author of the *Apocalypse*), Mary Magdalene and Lazarus. Grotowski and his actors—again the five men and the one woman—first rehearsed the action without words or with improvised ones. When the action was set, words were found to match the various parts of it—from the Bible and *The Brothers Karamazov,* from T. S. Eliot and Simone Weil—"sources which could be regarded," as the program puts it, "as the work not of one writer but of the whole of mankind." I think the whole of mankind would arrive at those texts about as soon as a thousand monkeys would type out *Hamlet,* but let that pass.

"The cast," as I wrote in *New York* magazine, "go about their standard business of beating, raping and crucifying one another." There are homosexual as well as heterosexual rapes, there is our old friend castration once again, and there is a great deal of that cruel, infernal laughter these productions abound in. There is, further, the administering of a footbath acted out in veristic detail (perhaps so that

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the water can be bottled and sold to the faithful), there is a delightful scene in which the entire cast take turns vampirizing a wound in the Simpleton's side and falling over backward like replete leeches. There is much copulating with a loaf of bread, and there is one bit where an actor transfers some snot from his nose into that of another's. Bits of liturgy are chanted, and the final sequences are acted out by the light of candles, which the last departing actor snuffs out.

Let me quote from the program the text of one of the ensemble scenes. "These invocations from the Song of Solomon follow straight after the love-making scene between the Simpleton and Mary Magdalene. Now Judas and Lazarus take up the roles of bride and groom. *Judas:* How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse, thy necks is as doves [*sic*]. *Lazarus:* How fair is my love. *Judas:* Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart on the mountains of spices." What, we may well ask, is that supposed to mean? To be sure, I rather like "thy necks is as doves," in which I recognize the voice of the whole of mankind, but other than that? Why should Christ and the Magdalene be making love? Why should Judas and Lazarus then ape that lovemaking? And why, above all, should Judas and Lazarus make love to the text of the Song of Songs? For shock value, I suppose, but whom besides a few pious Polish Catholics, who most likely stay out of the Laboratory Theatre, can this be expected to shock? Grotowski's answer would presumably have it that this is to be:

> *confrontation* with myth rather than identification . . . while retaining our private experiences, we can attempt to incarnate myth, putting on its ill-fitting skin to perceive the relativity of our problems, their connection to the "roots," and the relativity of the "roots" in the light of today's experience. If the situation is brutal, if we strip ourselves and touch an extraordinarily intimate layer, exposing it, the life-mask cracks and falls away.[1]

This is the typically hieratic, arcane, incense-clouded and humorless diction of Grotowski. First we are supposed to clothe ourselves in the ill-fitting skin of myth, then strip to an extraordinarily intimate layer —some kind of metaphysical quick-change act; but presently things get hairier yet. "Even with the loss of a 'common sky' of belief and the loss of impregnable boundaries, the perceptivity of the human organism remains. Only myth—incarnate in the fact of the actor, in his living organism—can function as a taboo. The violation of the living organism, the exposure carried to outrageous excess, returns us to a concrete mythical situation, an experience of common human truth." Why must theatre by mythical, I wonder. What is a "concrete

1 Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre* (Simon and Schuster, 1970). All quotations from Grotowski, when not otherwise indicated, are from this book.

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mythical situation"? Are there abstract ones? And are we to understand that "common human truth" can be experienced only in terms of violations of taboos? And must the "violation of the living organism" be "exposure carried to outrageous excess"? Well, outrageous excess Grotowski's theatre certainly does provide; but even that outrage, as we shall see, is ambiguous in effect and limited in efficacy.

Let me quote again from my earlier account: "Before *Apocalypsis* [the spectators] are loudly commanded to read the program carefully; as they enter, they must divest themselves of everything they carry, including these programs, which they are permitted to pick up as they leave. At that time they are also handed a kind of icon, a woodcut emblematic of the play, along with a lengthy statement from the Master explaining with hierophantic modesty and in absurd detail how these productions are group efforts in the truest sense. Sold also are expensive, mystagogic and totally unreadable books in which the Master sets forth his teachings. And the program notes, by Grotowski and his literary adviser, Ludwik Flaszen, consist of the most portentous lucubrations this side of scientology." Next to a needle's eye, the door to *Apocalypsis* was the hardest thing for us ordinary camels to pass through.

But few critics are ordinary camels. "At present the theater's only hope of life-giving heresy seems to rest in the hands of Jerzy Grotowski," begins Richard Gilman's tribute to him in *New American Review 9*. Thanks to Grotowski, Gilman continues, the theater "has felt itself in the presence of something very like a redemption." In *The New Republic,* Stanley Kauffmann wrote enthusiastically: "These three plays—together, more than as separate entities—were a major theatrical experience in my life . . ." But at least that "together, not as separate entities" strikes me as right, for the Grotowskian theatre cannot present plays—it presents only Grotowski. Everything is reduced to a common Grotowskian denominator. Significantly, in a decade Grotowski has come up with only nine productions; each one of them will be rehearsed some four hundred times before it is ready for viewing; and Grotowski sits there watching every performance of each production—which would be enough to drive mad anyone not mad already. If we read in *Towards a Poor Theatre* what Grotowski has done with *Doctor Faustus,* a play about which we know and care more than a Grotowskified Słowackization of Calderón or some wispy piece of symbolism of Wyspiański's, we see that the result has little bearing on Marlowe's play and is the very sort of outrage Jan Kott will perform on Shakespeare.

I cannot seriously be expected to argue logically against the type of thing one finds on any page of *Towards a Poor Theatre.* We read here, for instance, about "resonators." The average actor, we are told, knows only about the head resonator, i.e., using the head to amplify the voice. But an actor who makes a study of it discovers that "he can

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exploit not only his head and chest, but also the back of his head (occiput), his nose, his teeth, his larynx, his belly, his spine, as well as a total resonator which actually comprises the whole body and many others, some of which are still unknown to us." I fail to see to what use, beyond encouraging speculation about what the urethral resonator might sound like, this kind of thing can be put. Nor do I see what can be done with this description of acting in terms of "ideograms": "the analysis of a hand's reflex during a psychic process can be expressed through a sign, an ideogram . . ." Now if the psychic process is, let us say, the decision to change jobs, I do not see why this should be followed through all limbs and extremities; even less do I see why the physiological reflexes, once apprehended, need further translation into signs. But what I see least of all is how these reflexes can be produced "so quickly that thought—which would remove all spontaneity —has no time to intervene." How can anyone who rehearses a production for over a year and watches each performance like a blinkered hawk speak of spontaneity? Not even *kabuki* and *kathakali,* by which all this is influenced, would presume to do that.

After the three Grotowskian presentations here, the chorus of praise, sometimes with minor reservations, was virtually unanimous and included such diverse choristers as Clive Barnes, Walter Kerr, Eric Bentley, Stanley Kauffmann, Harold Clurman, Richard Schechner, Elizabeth Hardwick. In fact, the only reviewer who shared what would otherwise have been my solitary indignation was Ross Wetzsteon in *The Village Voice,* whose two articles on the subject I heartily recommend. One can understand readily enough what Grotowski means for Poland. On the one hand, he is the natural outgrowth of the political violence and religious persecution that have brutalized Polish history; on the other, he may seem a great moral hero to those Poles who do not want to knuckle under to socialist realism. To disaffected audiences everywhere, the sadomasochism and homosexuality of this theatre (only one woman, and she quite homely; the handsome Ryszard Cieslak, Grotowski's special friend, always being stripped and displayed), its very Artaudian cruelty, may offer corroboration and sustenance. But it is by examining more closely what Grotowski means to an avant-garde American critic that we can best get at his essential, dubious appeal.

In reviewing *Towards a Poor Theatre* for *The New York Times Book Review,* Richard Gilman wrote of Grotowski: "he has fought to obtain the painful and not yet known truth beneath appearances and to develop clear signs for their manifestation." (I take that "their" to be an error for "its"; clearly what Grotowski, or Gilman, wants manifested is the truth, not the appearances.) But how does one find clear signs for a not yet known truth? And by whom is this truth not yet known? If by audiences, then what is so special about Grotowski? Any halfway clever theatrical event provides something unknown and surprising for the audience. If, however, the truth is unknown to Gro-

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towski himself, he must be humbly groping for it and trying to express it by whatever tentative means; to develop "clear signs" for something you yourself are in the dark about strikes me as an act of arrogance and folly.

In his *New American Review* piece, Gilman claims, like Grotowski, that "life in the present is inauthentic"—as if it had ever been any more or less authentic than now. By the very fact of being, life acquires all the authenticity it needs, though Grotowski apparently demands some kind of myth or religion to authenticate it, a process that all the alembics of his laboratory will prove insufficient to activate. But, according to Gilman, Grotowski is "struggling with a language inadequate to the new actuality of what he has been doing." This "actuality" must then, logically, be prior to the theatrical language that is to express it, and one wonders just what Grotowski's work in its pretheatrical phase might be. "Artistic creation," Gilman informs us, "is an order opposed to the order of the world"; Grotowski and his actors "place us in the presence of emotion and consciousness themselves . . . of a creation and not an image of one." And Gilman goes on to speak of "the only justification art provides: its testimony to the *fact* of the imagination as life-giver in the teeth of life itself. The wish to have a work finally 'say' something emerges from a blindness to what it is actually doing—putting us in the presence of a life our own lives are powerless otherwise to unearth." But what good is our being put in the presence of some other, perhaps richer, kind of life if that life does not say anything to us? How does it benefit us to contemplate the complexities, subtleties, originalities of Grotowski's art if that art does not speak to us? And why should artistic creation be an order opposed to the order of the world? Certainly a poem is written differently from the way an income tax form is filled out; lovemaking is different from the representation of it in an opera or ballet. But from this to an "opposition" is a long way. The artist's imagination may express a quarrel with the world or a dream of utopia. But even such creation must avail itself of methods of juxtaposition, assemblage, composition that have their equivalents in biological, chemical, mathematical processes at work both in nature and in the laboratory. And even if the artist's subject matter may seem totally revolutionary, it is never very far ahead of science or history, which, often regrettably, proceed in analogous directions toward identical goals. In any case, the images of *Akropolis, Apocalypsis,* and *The Constant Prince* are definitely trying to say something to us; it is just that under the delusion of saying it highly originally, they say it primitively and crudely.

But Gilman has not invented his own Grotowski; he quotes directly from the Master: "In art, it is not life itself that makes the context—it is the objects of art. That means to do a great work one must not observe life. That effort is artificial. We observe life as we live it." So far this is no more than the good old doctrine of aestheticism, *l'art*

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pour l'art restated rather more clumsily than by some of its nineteenth-century practitioners, only to be saluted by critics like Gilman and overwhelmed audiences as some wonderful new truth opposite to life. But Grotowski continues (again quoted by Gilman): "To say that in order to create I must observe society is wrong. Society is always there in our experiences." What seems to remain unperceived by Gilman and the rest is the considerable jump from "life" to "society" treated as if it were no jump at all. What Grotowski seems to oppose is merely socialist realism—which is indeed the depiction of life as officially prescribed by a society, or, at any rate, by the government of that society. Of this, quite understandably, Grotowski wants no part. But to leap from opposition to a communist, capitalist, bourgeois or any other society's official view of life to the opposition of life itself—a feat of hyper-Pascalian gymnastics—is humanly and artistically self-destructive. And it does not matter whether it is done knowingly or not, as part of a politically necessary, self-protective stratagem or out of some insane need to be different at any cost.

What does it mean when Gilman interprets Grotowski's work as placing us in the presence of emotion and consciousness themselves, of a creation and not an image of one? (Kauffmann, more cautiously, but not cautiously enough, spoke of "bone-deep truth.") How does Gilman imagine a pure emotion or consciousness being deposited on a stage, or anywhere else—except, of course, as an image, a representation? But Gilman believes in some kind of pure "creation," which strikes me as mere word-mongering. A creation of what? If of something unrelated to anything, how can another human being recognize its meaning? And can anyone honestly believe that new feelings, new emotions can be introduced into our affective repertoire at this late date? Clearly, there are new ways of expressing them. But even a *Finnegans Wake* says something identifiable, and says it with relation to something and someone: words, however boldly combined; and a reader, however ideal.

But perhaps the best example of Gilman's method, which I take to be representative of that of many true apostles, is contained in this sentence: "Almost every movement and sound is what can only be described as 'pure,' without precedent and predictability, yet wholly inevitable, accurate, created, true." Here the Master's and the disciple's ravings are in perfect harmony. If something is wholly unprecedented and unpredictable, to what can it then be true? And in what sense can it be called accurate? If there is no such concept as "time," or if a watch is making up its own time, in what sense can we call the watch accurate? "Created," yes; but why "inevitable"? Why is it inevitable that a tortured Prince should provide funny wind noises for the rest of the cast? What makes such sounds, or the disfigured recitation of words through spinal resonators (whatever they may be) "pure"? Pure what? And all this from a critic who does not even speak Polish, a

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language of which Grotowski occasionally does make some sort of use.

There, however, is the crux of it. Grotowski and Gilman are both against language. They are part of that anti-language movement that has gained control of all the arts, even those that make little or no use of words. In a sense, all of Grotowski's elaborate researches into a *via negativa* (attempts to remove whatever might block an actor), ideograms, confrontations with myth, elimination of almost everything but the actor-audience relationship, are efforts to get past communication through language. This reminds me of the periodic efforts of avant-garde filmmakers to eliminate dialogue and return in one way or another to silent films as being more pure, more visual. But the fact remains that the word, even if it is not indispensable to the stage or screen event, is a great help to it. It is possible for a human being not to speak, by being a baby or a Trappist monk. But in terms of theatrical or cinematic communication, at least in a work of some length, a good deal more gets conveyed if the author and actors are not Trappist monks or babies. We created the word (or, if you prefer, God created it) because we need it and find that it serves us well—even in such highly unnaturalistic constructs as the poems of Mallarmé, the plays of Beckett, etc. Anyone wishing to jettison the word, proceeds, I firmly believe, either out of a jaded *ennui,* boredom with something he chooses to consider too profuse and ubiquitous; or out of some sense of impotence—that everything has been said already and that there is nothing further to achieve. But that should stimulate the creative mind to even greater efforts toward making words create and perform, rather than give up something so fundamental as *not* to distinguish us from the beasts, which clearly have it too—in some cases more clearly than our own young people.

There is also another significant aspect of Grotowski's work, one that James Roose-Evans has summarized adequately in his book, *Experimental Theatre:*

> Grotowski is concerned with the spectator who has genuine spiritual needs and who really wishes, through the confrontation with the performance, to analyse himself. The very physical proximity of the actors and audience is intended to assist the collective self-analysis to take place. Does this imply a theatre for an élite? The answer is a positive, yes. Grotowski insists that this be made clear from the very beginning: "We are not concerned with any audience but a special one."

This worthy aim, too, elicits serious doubt. What is so special about a theatre of collective self-analysis? All art makes us, if we are receptive, examine its values against our own and vice versa, in a dialogue of self-analysis, collective or not. But for the analysis to be effective, the audience must be given something that, on one level at least, it can identify. But when things are so vague that the devoted Roose-

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Evans, who has seen the show and read Flaszen's explanation that the spectators at *Akropolis* are the living, the living watching the dead in whose deaths they are implicated, can nevertheless write, "The audience, however, is not involved. They represent the Dead," we are in trouble. A Rorschach test by itself—without controlled conditions, guidance, supervision—is not going to be a helpful tool for self-analysis.

But even assuming that Grotowski's "theatre of encounter" offers, more than any other, this collective self-analysis, and that such analysis is what is needed; is anything gained by a theatre that admits such small numbers of spectators and considers them an élite? Yes, there is that proximity to the actor (Grotowski wants us to "feel his breathing and smell the perspiration"; I don't!) but, surely, this distracts the attention from the play. And I believe that people who come to the theatre specifically to be psychoanalyzed are not an élite, but a plurality of neurotics and psychotics in need of help, help that they can get much better elsewhere. The sparse admissions, moreover, can be construed in Poland as an act of defiance of the régime with its programmed, mass-oriented art; in the world at large, they smack of snobbery that may deprive the very people who are supposed to be benefited. At the very least, Grotowski might demand from the forty to ninety people he admits to a performance affidavits to the effect that they are more demented than the hundreds he turns away. It is a terrible waste to inflict his theatre on the sane.

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B. H. HAGGIN

Music and Ballet Chronicle

THE LAST OF THE LINCOLN CENTER auditoriums, the Juilliard Theater in the Juilliard School, was inaugurated with a performance of Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* by the Juilliard American Opera Center, a unit of the School created to prepare vocal students for careers in opera, and in this preparation to include their first experience in actual performance. In making Tito Capobianco its director the School added the Opera Center to the organizations at Lincoln Center—the Metropolitan Opera, the New York City Opera, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—that are directed by men who are in one way or another incapable of directing them properly. What disqualifies Capobianco is the idea he shares with other directors of today that the work created by the composer and librettist is material for the stage director to manipulate and amplify and change in the exercise of his own imagination. As it happened the staging of *The Rake's Progress* was not as damaging as some of the others contrived by Capobianco, and in fact was skillful and effective much of the time. But it did include an egregious example of what the directors of today feel free to do: at the point in the brothel scene where Mother Goose claims Tom Rakewell for herself, Stravinsky, Auden and Kallman—having considered the various possibilities—decided to have her lead Tom out of the room; but Capobianco felt free to make a different decision—to have her remove her dress and spread herself on her back on the table, to have Tom undressed to his undershirt, lifted high, and deposited face down on her, and to have them lie in embrace. My contention is that—Stravinsky and his librettists having made their decision—no one, including Capobianco, has the right to make a different decision for them; and Capobianco's belief that a director does have this right makes him unfit for the position in which he will impart this belief, as principle and in practice, to young students who should have impressed on them the inviolability of the creative artist's work.

The performance took place on a Ming Cho Lee construction very much of the twentieth-century, with its iron posts to which were attached the visible stage lights, and distractingly incongruous with the eighteenth-century scenery and costumes, the Hogarthian reproductions on the curtain and at the sides. Stravinsky's music was of a kind which—unlike Verdi's in the opera house and Beethoven's in the concert hall—Erich Leinsdorf's accurate time-beating was enough to make effective, earning the applause after each act. Less justifiably, his entrance to begin the performance—fresh from the latest of his

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fiascos, this one with the Boston Symphony—and his entrances for the later acts brought him prolonged ovations from the audience. (I recall the public of fifty years ago as being as undiscriminating as the public of today; but it didn't go into the frenzies of enthusiasm for the third-rate equally with the first-rate that the public of today goes into.)

I should add that the new Juilliard Theater is not at all the thing of beauty and elegance Harold Schonberg and Winthrop Sargeant found it to be, but is accoustically excellent.

The impressive playing I heard the young pianist Murray Perahia do in Haydn trios at a New School concert a couple of years ago led me to attend his recital at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where I was disappointed by performances of Bach's boring Partita No. 5, Chopin's Impromptus and Schumann's *Carnaval* in which eruptions of violence alternated with excessively fussy expressive phrasing.

It is young Gelsey Kirkland's capacities that Balanchine appears now to be interested in exploring and using, as he was formerly interested in exploring and using Suzanne Farrell's. And as this interest led him to revive *Ballet Imperial* for Farrell, who moved beautifully in it but didn't look Russian Imperial, so now it led him to create a new *Firebird* for Gelsey Kirkland—with an entrance solo in which the inflections of the configuration of her lovely body were breath-taking but did not create the image of a powerful Firebird, and with a chasacteristic Balanchine supported adagio which exhibited her exquisite lyrical dancing, not the struggle of a captured bird. This lack of essential dramatic characterization was increased by the new costume of light-colored filmy drapery that seemed designed mostly to reveal the long lines of her legs, and that was completed on top by half of a Chagall tricorne, as absurdly irrelevant in itself as the other Chagallisms of the production, and dramatically damaging as a replacement of the normal headdress of plumes: when the Prince released her she didn't give him a plume with which to summon her in need; and when she appeared at the height of his struggle with Kastchei's Subjects it was without being summoned by his waving of her plume. And there was further dramatic damage from Jacques d'Amboise's making the Prince a swaggering oaf. On the other hand the new dance of the Princess and her Maidens and their dance with the Prince were charming; and the dance of Kastchei and his Subjects devised by Jerome Robbins, with effective new costumes realized from Chagall's designs, was better than Balanchine's in his earlier version. But the few new details in the concluding scene—the rushing back and forth of grotesquely masked servants with platters of food, the inexplicable appearance of Kastchei's Subjects, seemingly as interested spectators—didn't make the scene less inadequate than it had always been to the splendor of the music.

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In the New York City Ballet's shortened season caused by the orchestra's strike the only other new work was John Clifford's *Sarabande and Dance,* to the Debussy pieces orchestrated by Ravel—the first a slow *pas de deux* for Johnna Kirkland and Earle Sieveling, much of it good, but with moments of evident straining for the novelty that mustn't look strained for; the other a fast *pas de deux* for Verdy and Clifford in which she managed not to be made ridiculous by the atrocious costume designed by Joe Eula and the movements seemingly contrived in desperation by someone unable to make use of her stylistically individual capacities.

Clifford did better as a dancer, with the vividly clear and sharp style that enlivened the second *Pas de Deux* in *Agon* and produced a Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which I considered more effective than Mitchell's, though it too was flawed by an occasional excessive cuteness like Mitchell's. In this performance Villella's Oberon was flawed too by the excessive twirling of hands and fingers in which his regal arm movements ended. And in this performance Kent's partner in her lovely dancing in the second-act *divertissement* was the new young dancer Jean-Pierre Bonnefous, whose nervousness in the intricate Balanchine partnering he was unaccustomed to had earlier resulted in mishaps for Verdy in the *pas de deux* of *Raymonda Variations* and for McBride in the Tchaikovsky *Pas de Deux,* but who this time was sufficiently secure himself to give secure support to Kent in addition to executing his solo passages with unstraining technical brilliance and elegance. And finally, a performance of *La Sonnambula* was made notable by Earle Sieveling's Poet—distinguished in appearance, effectively acted, and admirably danced.

A point which a friend made about Balanchine's *Who Cares?,* and which hadn't occurred to me, is worth reporting: it seemed to him that the ballet, and even its title, were Balanchine's comment on Robbins's *Dances at a Gathering* and the public's response to it. There is no way of knowing whether this is true in fact; but it is true in effect: after Robbins had used a number of pieces by a distinguished serious composer and achieved a work as undistinguished and trashy as *Dances at a Gathering,* Balanchine demonstrated that—using a number of songs by a mere composer of Broadway musical shows, and recreating the images of the dances of those shows with his personal ballet idiom—he could produce a ballet which transcends its basic musical-show substance and is an overwhelmingly great work of art. This is what additional viewings of *Who Cares?* have enabled me to perceive, while they have confirmed for Clive Barnes that except for a few great moments "it is immoderately empty" and "carries show-biz conventions beyond their joke." The few great moments he refers to are the solos and duets of the principals, which are certainly the high points of the work. But these high points are led up to by what Mr. Barnes finds empty—the progression of num-

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bers in which Balanchine elaborates the musical-show movements in increasingly fascinating invention first for the large ensemble of *corps* and lesser soloists, then for the group of five solo girls, the group of five solo boys, and finally the succession of the five couples.

One thing to add is how superbly the company dances in *Who Cares?*—everyone in the company, but most noticeably, of course, the soloists, and most impressively the principals: not only the outstandingly accomplished Marnee Morris and McBride, but von Aroldingen, who does the best dancing of her career in her solo and duet with d'Amboise, as he does the best dancing of *his* career in his solo and numbers with the girls.

I have pointed out on occasion that Mr. Barnes reported seeing in ballets what had happened only in his mind; and I will add now that he does the same thing writing about dancers. Melissa Hayden's twentieth year with the New York City Ballet was the occasion for a fantasy about an imagined Hayden who from the first had seemed "born to be a straightforward classic ballerina," who in fact "became a great ballerina, as did Margo Fonteyn, the hard and gradual way," and who, if the New York City Ballet were "organized to have a Queen Bee prima ballerina at its head . . . would be [its] Queen Bee." And it was the occasion also for a repetition of the nonsense about the excessive importance in the company of its young dancers. The company is "dominated by youth—but Melissa Hayden is its greatest dancer. Youth is not an important quality in ballet . . . a good mature dancer is almost certainly better than a good teen-age dancer of the all too sudden moment." But the actual Hayden one saw on the stage was not the company's only mature dancer: it had also Kent and Verdy, who exhibited in classical dancing the exquisite fluidity, elegance and distinguished style the actual Hayden didn't have. Also, if Balanchine had concentrated his attention on the young dancers—Mimi Paul, Suzanne Farrell, and now Gelsey Kirkland—it was not just because they were young but because they too had extraordinary elegance and individual style in classical dancing; and the performances in classical roles by these young dancers with elegance and style were excitingly beautiful experiences that one was right in preferring to the technically proficient but stylistically crude and aggressive performances of the mature dancer without them. And finally, these young dancers with their elegance and style had nothing to learn from the mature dancer without them; whereas Villella, talking about Verdy once, had spoken of how much the younger dancers had learned by watching her; and when Balanchine had wanted to teach John Prinz how to dance with a ballerina in a classical *pas de deux,* it had been Verdy, not Hayden, whom he had chosen for Prinz to learn to dance with in *La Source.* On the stage of the New York State Theater, if not in Mr. Barnes's writing, it was Verdy who exhibited the matured art in classical dancing that made her the company's greatest dancer.

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The Joffrey Ballet's revival of Fokine's *Petrushka* was staged in part by Leonide Massine and in part by Yurek Lazovsky, both of whom danced in the production restaged in 1942 for American Ballet Theater by Fokine with the assistance of Lazovsky, who had danced in it when Fokine had staged it in 1940 for the de Basil company. I saw the production a number of times, mostly with Lazovsky's great Petrushka; and it wasn't surprising to me that what Massine and Lazovsky staged for the Joffrey Ballet looked, to my eyes, like a reproduction of the de Basil-Ballet Theater version—though with a couple of new details. The crowd that had milled about aimlessly in the 40's milled about aimlessly again now; but at two points there were sequences of choreographed movements by the people in the street in reply to the group on the balcony, which I had never seen before; nor had I ever seen the Showman, after his introductory flute solo, direct the dancing of the three puppets with movements of his flute. Quite possibly some details were changed or lost, as Mr. Barnes claimed (and as they have been in every ballet in the course of time); but the essentials that were there—even crowded onto the inadequate City Center stage, and even with the three puppets danced by young dancers without force of presence and projection—were enough to reveal the greatness of the work. And when I say "the work" I mean not just the happenings on the stage but these happenings in conjunction with the music that is integrally bound up with them, and whose extraordinary character, in turn, is fully realized only when one hears it with the action it is intended to be heard with. (As for Mr. Barnes's two-article challenge of the Joffrey production's accuracy, I take its chief purpose to have been the throwing of the Barnesian weight around, which was all it achieved with Barnesian confusion. Thus, Massine began to dance the title role in Fokine's original version in 1916, and danced it as late as the early 40's in Fokine's Ballet Theater version; but after that Mr. Barnes could write: "However, how much did Massine really know of 'Petrouchka'?" Or he could write that "Lazowski undoubtedly knows a great deal about 'Petrouchka'. . . . But unfortunately he did not even encounter 'Petrouchka' until 1940, when the ballet was already quite uncomfortably old. As was Fokine"; but then go on to write, "There are three possibly impeccable productions of 'Petrouchka' in the world," of which one "was at one time the American Ballet Theater production" that Lazovsky helped Fokine to stage; but then doubt the accuracy of Lazovsky's reproduction of this Ballet Theater production for the Joffrey Ballet.[1])

[1] Mr. Barnes's real purpose became clear in his review of the later production of *Petrushka* by American Ballet Theater: it was to confirm Ballet Theater as the sole rightfully anointed (by him) conserver of the past in ballet. Predictably, its "choreographic realization by [Dimitri] Romanoff and [Yurek] Lazovsky seemed to me to be virtually flawless. So much that was missing in the Joffrey Ballet version . . . came back vividly to life." Predictably also, "to be sure, there were one or two things I

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Alerted by Verdy, I attended this year's workshop performance of the School of American Ballet, which presented Bournonville's *Konservatoriet* staged by Stanley Williams, and parts of *Coppélia* staged by Alexandra Danilova, whose great performances in this work I saw in the 40's. And as Villella said in his introductory remarks, one could form a ballet company on the spot with the young dancers one saw in the two works—a company with not only a first-rate *corps* but astoundingly accomplished soloists: Lisa de Ribère, charming in *Konservatoriet* and in the first-act supported adagio and *Thème Slave Varié* of *Coppélia;* Bonita Borne, grander in style in the third-act *pas de deux;* and Fernando Bujones, remarkable in the precision, ease and finish of his virtuoso feats in both works.

And finally I report on a meeting of Dance Society at which Verdy spoke in reply to questions, and, replying to the first question, thought that a Balanchine dancer was one who could do what Balanchine wanted. The music he was working with gave him ideas of movements, of these movements in a time, a shape; what he asked you to do might seem impossible for you to do, but it was a challenge and you must attempt it; and when you succeeded it turned out to have been thought out precisely for what you could do.

Asked about the difference in working with Robbins in *Dances at a Gathering,* she pointed out that unlike Balanchine, Robbins—returning to the company after many years—wasn't acquainted with most of the dancers he had to work with, and therefore had to do a great deal of experimenting with them to find out what he could do with them. Something he tried with one dancer in one Chopin piece suggested following it with something else done by another dancer in another piece; what this dancer did suggested trying him together with someone in another piece, or trying him in something originally devised for someone else. And his way of working out *her* single solo was to dance it himself while she watched and imitated his movements behind him; then, when he told her to dance it, he kept stopping her after a phrase in order to try by dancing himself something new this phrase had suggested to him—a different thrust of the arm, an additional syncopation. For this experimentation he had to have all the dancers present all the time; and with the other rehearsing they had to do for the company's large repertory this created great difficulties for them.

One important difference between Balanchine and Robbins was

missed or noticed . . ."; but predictably again, "tiny things like this only bear out the authenticity of the general production." Being away from New York, I could only strongly doubt that this "choreographic realization" in which Lazovsky was involved was very different from the one he had helped to produce for the Joffrey Ballet; and in reply to my inquiry Edwin Denby began with the statement that the two were "slightly different," and, after describing a few of the slight differences, ended: "No great difference to me."

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that Balanchine, after completing the essential architecture of his ballet, left the detailed finishing of the movements to the dancers, whereas Robbins controlled their every slightest movement. And another important difference was that Balanchine worked only in terms of classical ballet, whereas Robbins brought in all his experience outside of classical ballet, his sense, from his Broadway experience, for audience reaction, and even psychoanalytic ideas. So for a dancer who had been doing only pure classical ballet with Balanchine, working with Robbins was a fascinating, exotic, almost naughty experience—like having a little fling. For herself she could say that the experience had given her a new realization of Balanchine's greatness; but she had to add that Robbins was the only choreographer with a creative drive similar to Balanchine's; and in this statement, as in the others, she revealed a recognition of his impressive gifts.[2]

Asked what—as someone who had danced a great deal with Villella—she would say about him, as against what she could say about dancing with Peter Martins, Verdy answered that her long experience with Villella had taught her to respect and admire his intelligence, his honesty, his intense desire, when he performed, to give everything he had, his real suffering when he failed to achieve what he expected of himself; and for her there was no question of his greatness. In their work together she felt a "provocation" between them that almost always produced moments in which they achieved something extraordinary. It was a relation she would describe—and here she smiled winningly—as "loving competition: I *submit*—but compete; he is *gallant*—but competes also." Martins, on the other hand, was still in the process of revealing himself; and feeling safe with the technical background provided by the school of the Royal Danish Ballet, he was free to explore what Balanchine could give him. Her experience with him had been too limited for her to know much about him; but she could say she had found him a wonderful partner. And there was physically so much of him—here she smiled again—that at whatever point she had felt apprehensive, she had found a bit of Peter Martins there to make her secure.

After John Simon's conclusive demolition of George Steiner's pretensions as scholar and thinker, in a review of his *Death of Tragedy* in this magazine a few years ago, it has been astonishing and disheartening to see Steiner's similarly pretentious writing continue to be published—not only in *The New Yorker* but in more distinguished magazines. And the range of the pretensions has been extended to include music: a reader has sent me Steiner's review in

[2] But I am sure this extraordinarily perceptive and intelligent person recognized also what understandably she left unsaid: that in this art, as in every other, value depends not only on what gifts the artist possesses, but on what use he makes of them—in which Robbins can be faulted for his lapses of taste, his show-biz cleverness, slickness, cornyness and pretentiousness.

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The New Statesman of David Cairns's new translation of Berlioz's *Memoirs,*[3] which is a piecing together of Steinerian inventions such as Simon demolished.

He begins with an imagined situation in 1950 which made Jacques Barzun's high claims for Berlioz in his *Berlioz and the Romantic Century* that year look eccentric—a situation in which "very few recordings of Berlioz's music were available. The conductors who performed him—Beecham in London, Charles Munch in Boston—seemed to be making a special case," and "Berlioz figured as the begetter of a few worn *Konzertstücke,* such as the Queen Mab trills from *Romeo and Juliet* and the hammer-blow processional from *The Damnation of Faust.*" Actually it was in 1950 that Clough and Cuming completed their *World's Encyclopedia of Recorded Music,* which devoted two and a half double-column pages to recordings of Berlioz's *Requiem, The Damnation of Faust, Harold in Italy, Symphonie Fantastique* (six versions), instrumental and vocal excerpts from *Romeo and Juliet, The Trojans* and *L'Enfance du Christ,* and the overtures—*Beatrice and Benedict, Benvenuto Cellini, The Roman Carnival* (ten versions), *The Corsair, Les Francs-Juges* and *King Lear.* These indicated considerable activity before 1950; and in fact sixteen years before Barzun's book Turner's *Berlioz,* and a year later Wotton's *Hector Berlioz*—both in illuminating contact with the man and his music as Barzun's high-flown writing was not—had appeared in England, where Hamilton Harty had performed Berlioz for years and had made recordings, available here in the '30s, of excerpts from *Romeo, The Damnation of Faust* and *The Trojans,* and the overtures. Also available here on records at that time had been Weingartner's and Walter's performances of the *Symphonie Fantastique,* an abridged *Damnation of Faust* and excerpts from *L'Enfance du Christ.* And in this country Toscanini had begun to perform the excerpts from *Romeo* with the New York Philharmonic and NBC Symphony in 1928, *Harold in Italy* in 1929; he had performed the entire *Romeo* with the Philharmonic in 1942 and broadcast it with the NBC Symphony in 1947, and had recorded the excerpts that year; and Koussevitzky had begun to perform the *Symphonie Fantastique* in the '20s, and had performed *Harold* and recorded it in 1945. In short, in the twenty years before 1950 there had been sufficient performances, recordings and broadcasts of the major works for the musical public to have become familiar with them and for part of this public to have recognized their greatness. And what happened after 1950 was not, as Steiner claims, a reversal of his imagined situation, but a continuation of the actual situation: additional performances, recordings and broadcasts, and additional appreciation of the works.

[3] MEMOIRS OF HECTOR BERLIOZ, translated and edited by *David Cairns.* Alfred A. Knopf. $12.50.

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Steiner attributes the alleged reversal in part to the efforts of writers like Barzun and Cairns and the conductor Colin Davis; and whereas I doubt that Barzun's high-flown intellectualism about Berlioz as a figure in the Romantic Century, in his pretentiously gigantesque book, won Berlioz any listeners, or that his worthless comments on the works as pieces of music increased anyone's appreciation of them, I can believe that Davis's superb performances of them and Cairns's perceptive writing about them did persuade additional listeners in England. Steiner recognizes that Berlioz's genius had something to do with it, but also "the way we now 'read' his art and presence"—which brings us to further Steinerian inventions. We "read" Berlioz's art and presence, according to Steiner, as listeners whose "awareness [and] habits of recognition" are penetrated with "the currency and authority of Wagnerian opera," but who on the other hand have seen "Wagner's politics and theories of music . . . recently . . . in need and receipt of strenuous apologia." And so "the simultaneous obviousness and ambiguity in the Wagnerian presence, together with the gradual distancing from us of Schoenberg—especially of that in Schoenberg which is a logical extension of *Tristan* and *Parsifal*—have given Berlioz a new character. He embodies an alternative possibility." But my own love of Berlioz's music —exactly like my love of Haydn's, Mozart's, Beethoven's, Schubert's, Verdi's, Musorgsky's, Debussy's, Mahler's, Stravinsky's—was a direct response to each work experienced in and for itself by a mind not at all concerned with any other music, and specifically not with Wagner's and Schönberg's; and what I know of a number of other people makes me certain that the members of the public who have come to love Berlioz's music have done so in similar direct response to what they have heard, not because it offered an alternative to Wagner.

Moreover, Steiner elaborates on what Berlioz's alternative offers: "Against Wagner's harmonic polyphony and the vertical mass of sound generated in Mahler and Schoenberg, Berlioz represents the criterion of melody. Arguably, no one after Mozart has produced melodic ideas of such sheer loveliness." This is additional invention: the striking differences in Wagner, Mahler and Berlioz are those of the substance and method of the "harmonic polyphony" that is to be heard in Mahler, and even in Berlioz, as well as in Wagner. And, arguably, Schubert produced, after Mozart, melodic ideas of the sheer loveliness of Berlioz's.

Steiner's final invention is that Berlioz's achievement was more than a purely musical one. "He was a man of fierce intelligence, persistently responsive to the politics, ideologies and social stress of the day"; therefore "even where no text is being set, Berlioz's music is excitingly and at times damagingly grounded in exterior drama and occasion. It makes forceful, sophisticated statements about life and society. . . . Berlioz is, in some respects, a musical genius for the

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non-musician. Our present mood responds to his unrest, to his manifold interests and engagement in history." I don't recall at the moment to what extent Berlioz was as a man responsive to the political and social conditions of his time; but I know that as a composer he made no statements about these matters in his music, and that the only extra-musical influence on his operation as a composer was literature—the drama and poetry of Shakespeare, Virgil, Goethe and others. And in this operation he was a musical genius for the musician, producing nothing for the non-musician to respond to. One can apply to it Edwin Denby's observation that "to recognize poetic suggestion through dancing one has to be susceptible to poetic values and susceptible to dance values as well": the communication of the poetic content of the Love Scene and *Queen Mab* Scherzo of *Romeo* is effected through exquisite musical writing which represented in Berlioz, and requires in the listener, not only a susceptibility to poetic values, but the same suceptibility to musical values as the exquisite writing in a Mozart quartet.

After all this about the music Steiner comes to the occasion for his review, and makes the true statement that Berlioz "was one of the foremost musical critics of his century and his *Memoirs* are a masterpiece." But concerning Cairns's new translation of the *Memoirs* he is fulsomely inaccurate—the most important example being the statement that "Cairns's English pulses with vital élan; it is gay, histrionic, biting . . . as the original requires." The fatuous belief responsible for Barzun's mistranslation of Berlioz's letters and other writings was that writing in English today Berlioz would write with Barzun's prissy urbanity; and the unexpectedly similar belief responsible for Cairns's translation of the *Memoirs*—unexpected because of the disciplined intelligence evident in his excellent music criticism and his enlightening notes for the *Memoirs*—is that writing in English today Berlioz would write in the manner of a cultivated Londoner. Writing in English today Berlioz would produce the same rhetorically heightened and impassioned prose as he produced in French; this, therefore, is what a translator of his French must produce in English; and the way to do it is to adhere closely in the English to Berlioz's words, order of words and sentence structure in the French—as against Cairns's changing of all these, which produced not an English equivalent of the Berlioz original but a well-written paraphrase of it.

When I received the book I want straight to the moving concluding passage, of which the French is:

> Je finis . . . en remerciant avec effusion la sainte Allemagne où le culte de l'art s'est conservé pur; et toi généreuse Angleterre; et toi Russie qui m'as sauvé; et vous bons amis de France; et vous coeurs et esprits élevés de toutes les nations que j'ai connus. . . .

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> Quant à vous, maniaques, dogues et taureaux stupides, quant à vous mes *Guildenstern,* mes *Rosencranz,* mes *Iago,* mes petits *Osric,* serpents et insectes de toute espèce, *farewell, my friends;* je vous méprise, et j'espère bien ne pas mourir sans vous avoir oubliés.

"I end," says Berlioz; "I come to an end," Cairns has him say; and so thereafter to the final sentence. "As for you," says Berlioz to the "maniacs, stupid mastiffs and bulls"; "as for you," he repeats to "my Guildensterns"; for similar rhetorical effect he repeats "my" before each of the other names; and his closing hope is "not to die before I have forgotten you." But Cairns has him say instead:

> For you, morons, maniacs, you dogs, you Guildensterns and Rosencrantzes, Iagos, Osrics, gadflies, crawling worms of every kind; farewell, my friends, I scorn you, and trust to have forgotten you before I die.

Nor is it only such an unusually emotional passage that Cairn rewrites in this damaging way. Recounting the hostility of French and Italian composers to Beethoven's symphonies when Habeneck introduced them to the Parisian public, Berlioz exclaims: "Que d'abominables sottises j'ai entendu dire aux uns et aux autres sur ces merveilles de savoir et d'inspiration!"—"How many abominable stupidities I have heard said to various people about those marvels of skill and inspiration!"—which Cairns changes to "I have heard them airing the most lamentable nonsense about those marvels of beauty and technical mastery."

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VERNON YOUNG

Reflections on Two American Films

Last Summer (Frank and Eleanor Perry; from a novel by Evan Hunter): the material here is Youth—that burning, heretofore boring question. Three 16-year-old kids on a beach—four really, but three have solidarity, Peter, Dan and Sandy. They love each other more-or-less; let's say they form a sorosis, in the botanical meaning: a pulpy, undifferentiated cluster with a common stem, for they are not yet able to exist autonomously. Like all the American young, they are inarticulate, but they manage with a vocabulary all their own, a code their own, a pact that binds. They "talk dirty" because it's their only way of communicating at the erotic level. Somewhere in the offing are their parents, shadows referred to but not glimpsed (the one who is shouldn't have been—it was an artistic error): by the kids' descriptions, they are of course absurd. The young are usually unconscious Freudians: to them, all judgments are sexual. Into this 3-pack arrangement comes Rhoda, a bit of a square. She wears braces on her teeth and too much swimsuit on her girl-scout body; she can't swim, she can't swap the idiom; clearly she is destined to be kicked out of bed, as it were. If her incipient maturity rebukes the others, she is nonetheless dominated by the ease with which they tote their anatomical charm and their defensive vulgarity. In a patronizing way, Peter becomes fond of her but Sandy, the future American mother, frowns on any threat to divide allegiance among the three. Like the maimed seagull they have rescued at the opening of the film, Rhoda must be trained. Because it snaps back at her and can't learn to fly, Sandy kills the gull; when Rhoda won't take orders she, too, is symbolically destroyed.

Rhoda makes the mistake of confessing her feelings; she tells them the story of her mother's suicide-by-drowning some years before. (This sequence, pivoted on Cathy Burns, is as great as any of its kind ever set up by Bergman.) Her recital moves them and this is fatal; they don't want to be moved: parents are not something you cry over —they are something to be liquidated. They don't know it then but they're never going to forgive her. For transgressing the rules of the game, she must be punished. So at the last, on a sweltering day, they take refuge in the same clump of stunted woods where Sandy had got rid of the seagull. Rhoda tags along, though they don't really want her. (The boys have make on their minds but she's not the preferred object.) In a fret of sadism which is mostly the desire to *feel* what she verbalizes, Sandy takes off her bra, challenging Rhoda to do likewise. When Rhoda refuses and tries to leave, Don jumps her with the help of Sandy. Rhoda squeals pitifully for Peter's help but as before, when

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she was with the Puerto Rican who was attacked by hippies, he deserts the loser and joins the others. She is raped, with Sandy helping to hold her down. End of Summer.

It's about a lot of things, not just of our time, even if the social texture is as American as a waffle. It is about original sin, which is but the zoological urge towards self-protection. It is about the eternally destructive frigidity of the young, for the one thing youth fears—knowing in its cells that it can't yet risk losing the precarious identity it owns—is a genuine feeling, though the "genuine," in our day, is all it ever, in its sloppy way, talks about. The belief that adolescents have a warm response to life, which is chilled by their elders, is a sentimental lie circulated by people who refuse to remember what *they* were like when young! In the *Last Summer* situation, Rhoda, with her gauche maturity, is the one who feels: hence, she is the outsider, the substitute elder who must perish. Ironically, Sandy is in fact the generic parent-figure, a forecast of the kind of female who more readily flowers on American soil: enfranchised by the American male, she proliferates in every generation, dry and domineering, resented but perpetuated. For reasons probably rooted in the culture's origins—a theocratic ethos and frontier conditions—she is born, or at least brought up, with a male psyche. She was once shaped by the pioneer mother and in turn re-stated herself in her progeny. Father was too busy hunting, plowing the soil or running the crossroads store to take a hand in rearing her, and the culture was too thin to endow her with any but a sparse feminity. Later on, when the frontier is closed, she reappears as the wife of the hounded business man and the industry-builder; to her falls the maintenance of culture—which is something pursued in one's spare time, by militant women and effeminate men (see *The Mauve Decade,* by Thomas Beer, if it's still in print). Rhoda, if not broken for life, might actually become a woman by being raped: Sandy, never. She would like to be violated but it would do nothing for her if she were. She is a congenital spinster; however loose her talk, however fecund, biologically, she will remain dry, matter-of-fact, cold, sentimental and a bully. A real woman is always a bit of a whore. Since puritanism kills the whore in the woman and the woman in the man, the culture is sexually deadlocked; the men can't handle their unlovable women, they can only be devoured by them.

A pity—that a film so receptively composed and set in motion, so grounded in a psychology that undercuts the present blather about youth-with-no-place-in-the-world, should have anywhere faltered. It was a gross mistake to introduce a single adult, and that one a pale-faced clown, since the setting of the film was otherwise exclusive: no actual parent disturbs the arrogant unity of the adolescent realm. Again, the scene in the cinema, with both the boys "feeling up" Sandy, was a piece of unfunny crudity aimed at juveniles in the "real"

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audience and, unless I miss my guess, not likely to appeal to them anyway. These blunders only show how hard it is still for Americans to make a movie without removing their eyes from the real thing they have been shrewd enough to discover. In America, there is always someone looking over your shoulder, or you imagine there is. Film criticism appears to struggle with the same problem, an inability to go its way without alignments. (Peter and Dan are always looking for approval from Sandy.) The only review I read of this film—long after seeing it—was written I'd wager by a Sandy. I'm not interested here in naming and arguing. I only want to point out that her totally negative criticism was patently based on an assumption that the Perrys, who directed and wrote the movie, were an institution, that they represented an attitude she didn't like and that furthermore her readers knew what the attitude was and shared her aversion to it. She was little more explicit than this generalization suggests, except that she complained of the Perrys always trying to *explain* something. This background is quite unfamiliar to me; I know nothing about Frank and Eleanor Perry, I have not seen their previous films. I do believe that to *illustrate* something, cinematically speaking, is not the same as to explain it.

Next, I was accosted (there's no better word for it) by a visiting American critic who, having heard in advance that I admired this film, proceeded gratuitously, with laughter on the surface, to fault me for my approval—as if the scheme of things were at stake—and without offering a single precise argument for his view, based in the film itself. He simply howled me down: *"Last Summer!* Oh Jesus! Completely phoney! Listen, I've met these people, these Perrys who made it—they are such frauds! *You* would hate them!" . . . Conceivably, I might. I assume nothing about film-makers save the value of their achieved work. The last time I was at the Venice Festival I met a Czechoslovak director whose film I had been much taken by. He was as ill-bred a swine as I've met. In fact, I felt compelled to tell him, "I'm sorry, but I am not famous enough to afford bad manners." I still think he's a good movie-maker and I am incredulous when I find a practising critic who entertains the delusion that there is any necessary connection between talent and character, or between talent and sustained intellectual perception. I have long ago surrendered any desire to meet film directors, for however skilled they may be—as engineers, as craftsmen, as "show-business"—or even if they are touched with art, as we say that someone is touched with madness—culturally speaking, more often than not, they are brigands, mercenaries, wire-cutters, anarchists. I could name on the fingers of my left hand the film directors I know anything about who *might* be relied on not to go mad or spongy tomorrow, or next year. (I could but I won't.) Just wait long enough—which is never very long—and one or another of your favorite directors will disclose what he has been

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concealing—which a generous budget and/or public permissiveness now sanction him to exploit: the political conceptions of an imbecile, a sexual inferiority complex, or pure frustration at having to photograph other people when he'd prefer to photograph himself. Among eminent casualties of the last year, I'll content myself with pointing out, more in sorrow than in anger, Visconti's *The Damned* and (it pains me to confess it) François Reichenbach's *L'Indiscret*. Either of these films can best be described with Napoleon's judgment of Talleyrand—"A piece of dung in a silk stocking."

But I haven't finished with *Last Summer*. What interested me in the opinions of the two critics I have cited was how they relate to each other. So far as I know, the only thing the writers have in common is the fact that neither is a native American; each would like to be taken for one, or let me say that each appears eager to adopt the latitudinarian and idiomatic ethos which he—and she—believes to *be* most acceptably American. And it is by-and-large an American trait to ignore, desperately, the suspicion that innocence can be a source of evil, and that the young are not universally educable. A doughty American postulate insists that all phenomena are plastic, that all problems—technological *and* human—will yield to enterprise, industry and applied psychology. The expansion and eminence of the United States *materially* testifies to the proposition; it has accrued wealth, prosperity and power. But if everything has the defects of its qualities (Aristotle), the seemingly infinite plasticity of American endeavor has created a nightmare of the American scene. As every generation since the closing of the frontier inhabits an increasingly monolithic yet chaotic urban setting, it becomes all the more nostalgic for the ol' swimin' hole, the forest primeval, the Wilderness Trace, the incorruptibility of the Shoshone and for the alleged innocence of anyone under eighteen; thus, it feels prompted to give the succeeding generation the freedom it didn't itself possess, always on the assumption that this freedom is *freedom from* and is inexhaustibly elastic. Hitherto, the notoriously spoiled American child and the general adulation of the ephebe were merely characteristic and permeating ingredients, supplying the species with charm and energy or, alternatively, with a hopelessly juvenile outlook so much a part of the scene as to render any objections futile, intolerant or intolerable. As of now, the innocence, untroubled by a respectable education, has become a force; it has turned militant; the child is dictator to the man. To the indifferentism of Huck Finn, Penrod and that city-sprout of Salinger has been added Black Power, the sexual explosion, the assertion of everyone who feels himself as a category rather than a consciousness: the Homosexual, the Student, the Housewife, the Indian, the Under-Thirty; there has been added a Babel of heroin-injected Messianism and a thistle of so-called political doctrines from Marx, from Sorel, from Lenin, from Mao, from

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Sartre and from Herbert Marcuse. The American Adam[1] is no longer a myth evolved under the expanding conditions of 19th-century frontier society. He is at your door, naked and long-haired, as you might have expected.

Zabriskie Point (Michelangelo Antonioni; script by Antonioni and three collaborators who would be wise to remain anonymous; cinematography by Alfio Conti). Because I believe this film to be *morally* contemptible, I shall straightaway affirm the style by which it can positively be approved. We are, no doubt of it, in the presence of an artist. Antonioni can observe and shape, he can't invent. (Bergman can invent; he can't observe. Fellini used to be able to do both; today. . . . Subject Closed.) Always, in the Antonioni film, the camera dwells loiteringly on an *object* to make a statement about the whole milieu, to point up an incongruity, to espouse a sadness: here, a neon advertisement; two fire-red toilets in a desert gully; an old man wearing a ten-gallon hat, thinking about nothing to Pattie Page on the jukebox; TV mockups that look as real or as not-real as the "architecture"; the rhyming aridity of highway cloverleafs and the arroyos of Death Valley; the inevitable Jap-with-camera prepared to "shoot" the shooting as the State Police wait for the kid to taxi in with his stolen, Camp-painted plane. If Antonioni would do this and *only* this!—if he would just link documented relationships of things and people and rhythms: if he just wouldn't *think;* it is not his metier.

He retains a remnant from Classical thought that order is divine but for him its import is only aesthetic; he has the characteristically Italian inability to feel order as a civil principle. Italians have managed to live in a state of chaos for at least two thousand years! Since he abandoned the upper and the professional classes, Antonioni has become a subtle opportunist, assuming there is *any* shade of political intelligence involved in his great craftmanship. Frankly, I think he has no head for any but the primary political colors. In most of his films since *La Notte* he has *toyed* with the Left, as he has toyed with the Church. One recalls that in *The Eclipse,* as in *Zabriskie Point,* he made light of theft. Alain Delon's car was stolen and the man who stole it cracked up and was killed. The ostensibly moral point was that Delon was more upset by the loss of his car than by the death of the thief. So be it: nonetheless, the fugitive *was* a criminal. When that car was hoisted into view, the thief's hand was given special prominence in such a way as to imply the forbearance of the Nazarene! In *Zabriskie Point,* both the kids are thieves; the boy "borrows" an airplane, the girl "borrows" a car, with no notice given; it's only a step, given her insouciance, to borrowing for keeps (an airplane or the Metroliner) and producing a justification that will impress any Antonioni *in vicino.* In *Blow-up* (his title didn't mean what it sounded

[1] Acknowledgment: R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the 19th Century* (Phoenix Books, 1955).

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like but it was prophetic of his tendency), he contrived a sadistic scene in which a straw-brained photographer persisted in snapping a woman who politely asks, then begs, *not* to be photographed. To demonstrate that we need have no qualms about the rape of her privacy, Antonioni then reveals that actually she is dying to be assaulted (sexually) and the photographer will do as well as anyone—better, since he will give her back the incriminating photo. Irony in the plot? It is also the plebeian sneer of a taxi-driver or a hotel night clerk: "I know these fashionable women. You can lay any of 'em!"

The stylistic treatments of, respectively, *Last Summer* and *Zabriskie Point* would, if it were possible to consider them in isolation, lead one to opposite conclusions about their creators' points of view. The Perrys erase their guiding lines, they get in close, they include us in a cuddle with their boys and girls; when the kids run down the beach, the camera is blown after them like a wind or the spray of the breakers. The witness point is never from on high, as though to remind us we are seeing a small drama in the impersonal cosmos; the handling is subjective, yet we do not have to wait for the end to understand that if involved we are not *affianced* to the viewpoint of the children. If, on the other hand, you wandered into *Zabriskie Point* halfway through, recalling a statement Antonioni made some years ago that sex was the disease of our time (the symptoms of which he has ever been keen to visualise) you might conclude that with the ridiculous multi-copulation vision in Death Valley, he had created the too-inevitable setting for his thesis. (All I could think of was how strenuous it woud be to make love in the open desert at 250 stifling feet below sea level!) When the film is endured throughout, however, it is seen not to be an Olympian judgment of wasteland morality but a defense of it. The ethic is that of *Easy Rider* or *Midnight Cowboy,* the ratification of ignorance. The lad (Marc Frechette) is a lawless punk with no shadow of a claim to any opinion which should be taken seriously, for he has no formed identity, no social shape, no principle of existence (except freedom from); he has no problem and of course he cannot articulate. (Literally, I could barely understand a word he said. Spoken American language is really beyond a scandal!)

Huck Finn again, lacking the Missourian's poetic, lighting out for the territory. He is bored by the political youth group (my euphemism for those savages focused and brilliantly edited in the opening sequence) but he declares: "You gotta' choose one side or the other." *Why*? Rightly, the girl (and she's pure nobody) tells him there are a hundred sides; yet she changes her mind after he is killed when returning the plane. Everything is a set-up in this film. I'm not just ready to believe (despite my aversion to the American police) that cars-full of State patrolmen would be mustered to corral one youngster in a stolen plane, or that he would be shot to death, unseen and without provocation. By the time the final scene comes around, An-

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tonioni is showing not only his hand but his viscera, to say nothing of the opera impresario who lurks inside every Italian director. Aesthetic nihilism, nothing less: as in a beatific vision, the girl imagines blowing up her employer's desert studio (incidentally, the most attractive piece of modern domestic architecture I've noted in moons). We see this explosion not just once but fifteen times (if my count was correct), followed by a dreamily prolonged musical sequence in which gaily-colored fragments of the Thing society float through the air, a sequence which Antonioni was obviously reluctant to bring to a close.

*

Historical crises can never be explained by recourse to a single provenance: the more reason for noting, with some credulity, the coincidence of strange bedfellows.

S. G. Nechaev. Manifesto in *Narodnaya Rasprava,* Moscow. Summer, 1869:

> We come from the people, our skins wounded by the teeth of the present regime. We are guided by hatred for all who are not the people. We are devoid of any concept of duty to the State or of honour towards existing society, which we loathe and from which we expect only evil. We have an entirely negative plan, which no one can modify: utter destruction.[2]

Richard E. Hyland. "In Defense of Terrorism," in a special supplement to the *Harvard Crimson,* October 12, 1969:

> Terrorism could help restore the understanding of transcendence. Blowing up buildings destroys the product. . . . If buildings begin to blow up all around, people may well ask for a new inquest into the permanent. People might abandon the idea of suffering through life to build a permanent monument. They might adopt the idea of enjoying and participating in the humility towards something else but oneself. This might be possible only after a socialist revolution where self could be rejected for community.[3]

[2] Quoted from Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960).

[3] Quoted from *Encounter* (April, 1970).

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CHARLES W. MILLARD

Matisse in Paris[1]

CONSISTENTLY THE MOST ATTRACTIVE pictures in the Matisse centennial exhibition of over two hundred fifty works held at the Grand Palais in Paris last summer were the large group of works from Russia, all of them from the years around 1910. These pictures, bought originally by the collectors Stschoukine and Morosov and now divided between the Hermitage and the Pushkin Museum, stood out all the more because they have previously been so difficult to see in the original and because of their superb condition, which has preserved their surfaces intact and maintained the freshness of their brilliant colors. These colors, electric not only in their juxtapositions but in themselves, show how early Matisse mastered the problems that one is accustomed to associate only with the paper cutouts of his last years. In every case in which there were two similar pictures, that with the more intense colors and color contrasts was the better work. This was most apparent in the two versions of *La danse,* the 1909 picture from the Museum of Modern Art and the 1910 picture from the Hermitage. The landscape elements in blue and green are roughly the same in both pictures and of such flatness and density as no longer to serve as ground in the usual sense, but as pictorial elements of equal importance to the figures. The figures, however, are significantly altered, being executed in a matte flesh color with black hair in the New York version, whereas in the Russian version they are in brilliant orange with hair of a darker tone of the same hue. Since the figures in the latter picture are larger and spread more uniformly over the surface of the canvas, the amount of color represented by them is increased. That fact not only multiplies the visual intensity of the picture, but the interaction of the figures' color with the intense deep blue and green produces an optical effect of startling contemporaneity. Finally, the drawing in the 1910 picture is infinitely more suited to the composition in that the outlines are longer and less angular, the overall rhythm more continuous and better adjusted to the placement of the figures and their relationship to the canvas area itself. There is hardly a weakness in the composition, which demonstrates to what extent flatness, density, color saturation, size, and exact scale relationships were important in Matisse's art, and to what extent he was capable of mastering them. In the sense that it depends on carefully adjusted relationships of all these things, that art is a conventional

[1] This essay is dedicated to Donald Drew Egbert, one of the finest teachers I have ever known, on the occasion of his retirement from Princeton University. It was from letters to him that, at his suggestion, I took the material for my first contribution to THE HUDSON REVIEW.

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one, demonstrating how great pictures made with conservative means can still be.

La danse is important, however, not simply as a clear statement of the crucial nature of relationships in Matisse's art. It also shows how early he recognized the importance of purely pictorial claims in his painting and, placed in a major retrospective, it emphasizes the difficulty he had facing those claims between the two world wars, pointing up his constant efforts to create an art faithful both to life and to traditional pictorial conceptions. Stated more simply, Matisse arrived early at extreme flatness and a high degree of abstraction, and then spent a period of many years trying to create perspective spaces, modelled figures, and atmospheric compositions before he returned to absolute flatness in the late cutouts. It was as if he felt he had gone too far and needed to return to a more approachable art, not realizing that the sensuous richness of his color always gave his works a level of immediate approachability more significant than more traditional means could ever give. That there was a general decline in the quality of Matisse's works between the wars may be a subconscious acknowledgement of that fact. In any case, his development is not a steady unfolding toward a final flowering, but the relatively sudden achievement of great works after a brief period of intense experimentation, followed by a long period of uncertainty and attempt at compromise, followed, in turn, by a brief final period of the consistent realization of great works based on premises stated many years before.

In confronting a large portion of Matisse's *oeuvre* one is constantly aware of the importance of the size of individual pictures. Although he was capable of painting wholly successful small pictures—witness the tiny portrait of George Besson painted in 1917—Matisse's pictures always tended to be big, and not infrequently his biggest pictures are his best. Of the cutouts exhibited at the Grand Palais, one of the most beautiful was *Grande décoration au masque,* which measured something like 30 feet by 10. The apparent necessity of size, which resulted in so many fine decorative schemes, reflected not only the nature of Matisse's ambitions, but certain artistic considerations, such as the need for large color areas, which were endemic to his art. With the compromise of many of these considerations during the '20's and '30's, big decorative schemes such as the *Desserte rouge, La danse,* and *La musique,* were put aside in favor of easel pictures and pictures of such modest dimensions that they are perhaps more appropriately termed cabinet pictures. The only large decoration of this period is the set of murals for Albert Barnes which, fine as they are, are not free from the weaknesses inherent in Matisse's attempts to accommodate both pictorial and anatomical demands.

The scale of Matisse's pictures, and of the elements contained within them, is a somewhat more complicated problem. Along with growth in size in his pictures went growth in scale, represented by a diminution in the number of represented objects and increasingly closer views

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of those objects. Thus, panoramas and landscapes became less frequent as subjects, in favor of interiors and close-up views of objects and people. But as the purely pictorial and decorative demands of Matisse's pictures grew—or as he grew to accept them—there were increasing disparities between backgrounds and the figures or objects placed in front of those backgrounds. Figures and objects became increasingly uncomfortable pictorial elements partly because the flatness of the background—a wall, for example—became increasingly identified with the picture surface, squeezing the represented figure into an indefinite limbo between the two. This uncomfortable relationship is evident as early as the 1900 *Homme nu,* in which the breadth of the background, both as a represented plane and in the manner of its brushing, diminishes the figure in such a way that its human identity is challenged. The most acute and well-known example of this conflict, and also its most successful solution during the '20's and '30's, is the 1925 *Figure décorative,* in which the large scale of the assertive background makes the nature of the figure ambiguous. While the color and brushwork suggest that it is a living model, its scale clearly suggests that it is a piece of sculpture or a doll. The picture's success stems from coloristic and linear matters of which more will be said later. In general, Matisse was successful at accommodating the human figure to his compositions only when he treated it decoratively by flattening and simplifying it, as in the *Desserte rouge,* and subsuming it, Vuillard-like, into the total decorative configuration of the composition. In the best and most advanced compositions of the years before the First World War —*La danse,* for example—the human figure *is* the decorative configuration. This triumphant solution, to which Matisse returned in his cut-outs, sacrificed the scale demands of nature to those of the composition, although his synthetic power at the end of his life was such that he never had to surrender entirely the proportions of human figures in the compositions in which they appeared. The trouble into which Matisse was capable of getting himself in mid-career is evident in the 1917 *Peintre et son modèle,* in which the large planes of the walls, which function as abstract color areas, and those of the open window are rendered with a strength which underlines the weakness of the naturalistically diminished figure of the seated model. It is curious that the picture within the picture represents the model close-up, as if in acknowledgement of the problem. Such hesitancy before the human figure, generally set into a strongly conceived and executed background, is typical of Matisse's middle years. Not infrequently he chose to suppress the conflict by introducing pieces of sculpture into his pictures, since the scale relationships of objects could be more freely varied than those of human beings, but it was a problem from which he could ultimately extricate himself, as has been suggested, only by accepting once again a wholly decorative function for the figure.

Matisse's use of color is intimately related to the scale of his pictures, and suffered similar problems. The large scale of his best pictures is

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held by large areas of flat color at extremely high saturation, as in the *Danse,* and thus increase in scale meant increase in color saturation. The necessity of this relationship is obvious as early as 1901 in the *Pont Saint-Michel,* almost certainly an unfinished picture. The flat color areas of the window embrasure at the left are responded to by the single color area of the bridge and the quai, which lock structurally to the window shape. Although the color in this picture is not at particularly high saturation, the tonal range is fairly narrow and the number of hues fairly small, all of which gives unity to the composition. Another version of the same subject painted at the same date shows how much Matisse loses by breaking up his color areas, increasing the number of hues, and working with a more *tachiste* brushstroke. Simple *amount* of color, narrowness of tonal range, and the flattest possible application were generally necessary for the strength of his compositions. The coloristic equivalent to Matisse's problem of scale discrepancy is that of modulated as opposed to flat color areas, usually accentuated by obvious or impastoed brushwork as opposed to light and inconspicuous facture. His constant tendency, and that which represents the best in his art, was toward large, flat, thinly brushed color areas of high saturation, seen at their best in such a picture as the 1916 *Moroccans,* but in painting the human figure he often resorted to a good deal of modelling. Although this was not inevitably a hindrance, especially when his coloristic and tonal range was narrow, as in the *grisaille* portrait of George Besson, it could be disastrous when a modelled figure was placed in a flat, broadly-brushed interior, the effect being exactly that of the scale discrepancy between large advancing areas and small recessive ones. In both cases, whatever tended to emphasize his surfaces worked to the benefit of Matisse's pictures, and whatever tended to contradict those surfaces worked to their detriment. Effects of planarity and density, achieved by large scale and high saturation, were therefore extremely important. Atmosphere, on the other hand, was always a handicap to Matisse. This showed especially in some small stained glass windows exhibited in Paris which were all but destroyed by their translucency, even though their color was at fairly high saturation. Even reflective tile compositions, of which there was one example executed posthumously, were too suggestive of atmosphere to be successful. It is partly for this reason that the paper cutouts—large, flat, primary color areas with no depth whatever, are so brilliantly successful. Matisse also benefitted from using colors non-naturalistically, since this meant he was freer to arrange them according to the dictates of the composition rather than those of nature. In the 1901 *Pont Saint-Michel,* for example, the sky is pink and the entire bridge-quai area green. The more aggressive color at the top, the most recessive area of the picture naturalistically, helps maintain the surface tension and all-over flatness. Sometimes he used color in this way to stop "holes" in his pictures. A 1903 view of *L'atelier sous les toits* is a strong perspective view ending in a window.

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To keep the dark-toned interior from leaking out at the end, Matisse used brilliant oranges and reds to represent the sunlit exterior, bringing it as far forward visually as he could without destroying his careful construction. Finally, he was particularly fond of black, and particularly successful at its use. Because the color is so dense—so visually opaque—it often served him extremely well to keep certain areas on the surface or to make a background as little recessive as possible. In the *Moroccans* and the large 1932 mural project also known as *La danse,* black has a particularly important role, one which shows Matisse's debt perhaps to Manet and certainly to the Spaniards he copied in his youth.

Black has another function in Matisse's works in connection with drawing. Drawing in a wholly traditional way was always important to Matisse, more noticeably so in the earlier works than in the later. Although he experimented with drawing with color in the Fauve and *tachiste* works, drawing generally meant boundaries for him, and it is such edges that he used to establish and maintain his pictorial structures. They often create the congruences between represented and pictorial structure and, particularly during the '20's and '30's, can strengthen a picture to the point of saving an otherwise shaky composition. Not infrequently, Matisse used cages of black lines which established the picture surface and helped hold the composition there, as in the 1908 *Vue de Colliure.* Outline, on the other hand, was particularly important to the modulated pictures, especially when they were close valued, since it clearly delineated areas of the pictures that would otherwise have bled into one another, reading as muddy and unclear. Such is the case with the 1907 *Nu bleu* and the 1909 *Nu noir et or,* both among the finest of the pictures in which Matisse depended on a good deal of modelling and modulation. Matisse sometimes used a combination of the cage and outline functions of line to help tie his pictures together, as in the *Danse.* Here, the continuous chain of outline provides a broadly conceived web that unifies the entire composition, clearly delineates the broad color areas, and defines the large scale of the figures necessary for the success of the entire picture. Once or twice, as in the 1946 *Interieur jaune et bleu,* Matisse allowed his color to be formed freely behind a web of drawn lines, which gave an effect of transparency to represented objects. Such manipulation must have been related to the process by which he studied his larger compositions by moving pieces of cut out paper over the area to be painted and figuring the effect before making the final work. This, of course, led to the pasted cutouts as finished works, and it was by the acceptance of this procedure that Matisse finally rendered obsolete the necessity for drawn line. In the cutouts, large areas of pure color superimposed one on the other created their own drawing by the way in which shapes delineated themselves by being superimposed. Thus edge no longer needed to be drawn and pictorial structure no longer needed to be constructed, since both

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established themselves instantaneously by the creative process Matisse employed. The old conception of local color, on which Matisse had previously relied—that is, a drawn composition between the lines of which color was added—reversed itself, becoming a process by which the artist began with large color areas which were then cut and reduced until the proper compositional balance had been achieved. The edges between color areas were simply the result of this process, rather than being calculated in advance. It is interesting that Matisse made a great many black and white line drawings at the same time he was working with cutouts. In these prints and drawings, the thick black line no longer functions as shading, as it had in so many of the earlier lithographs and pencil drawings, but is at once the edge of defined shapes and shape in itself. Above all, the black line turns the paper surface into a tautly-stretched composition the pictorial terms of which are of much greater importance than the identity of the represented object. The cutouts have this same tautness, and are sometimes conceived with such rigor and finesse that it is no longer clear which of the color areas are meant to represent the figure and which the ground.

These final cutouts are the supreme statements of the end toward which Matisse's art had been tending from the beginning, pictorial works in which relatedness—connectedness—is of paramount importance That relatedness was finally achieved by heightening the physicality of the works as far as Matisse was able—by reducing color to saturated primaries (particularly blue, which could be used in large areas without destroying pictorial balance or becoming visually oppressive, as Cézanne had also discovered), by creating a line of great sensuousness that was at once non-drawn and the epitome of contour, and by asserting the absolute primacy of the artistic object by accepting its surface as the ultimate datum against all claims of atmosphere and perspective. That these were the conditions of greatness for Matisse's art had been demonstrated as early as *La danse,* and it is particularly telling that the companion *La musique* of the same year is a lesser picture precisely because the figures are isolated and the attempt to relate them is made not by connecting them but by the implications of their placement—by what are essentially spatial means. In *La musique,* the conflict between the heightened and simplified color and the spatial implications of the placement of the figures—between strongly stated flattening devices on the one hand, and spatial devices on the other—works against the success of the total pictorial statement. Matisse's was an art which brought new meaning to the Renaissance pictorial conception of relating discrete elements within the picture and which articulated new ways of declaring that discreteness and of creating the relationships necessary to it. In that sense it was a highly conventional art and one with profound affinities to the art of, say, Ingres, but its conventions in no way kept it from being a very great art indeed.

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PATRICK CRUTTWELL

Fresh Skins For New Wine

The New English Bible,[1] in England at any rate, has had what is politely called a mixed reception: which means, of course, a reception from which one gets the general impression that the votes *against* somewhat outnumbered the votes *for*. This, at least, is the impression I have gathered from the literary periodicals; it is likely, for reasons to be gone into later, that the ecclesiastical and theological journals have been rather kinder. Most of the reviews in the literary periodicals have naturally been written by literary critics, who judge the work from that viewpoint; and when faced with a work of the Bible's dimensions, far too huge to be read through for a review, but of which all of them had had already a partial knowledge, most of these critics seem to have cast about in their minds for those passages most moving and impressive in their memories (such as the last chapter of *Ecclesiastes,* the *Song of Songs,* or St. Paul on love in *First Corinthians* 13) and then compared the King James versions with those of the NEB. As the former were the versions sanctified by emotional memories, the latter had no chance at all. Denunciation was a reflex.

This method, basically lazy because it was not prepared to envisage the possibility of rehearing and revaluing, was also, in this case, an instance of the critical sin of judging and condemning a work for not being what its maker had specifically stated it did not try to be.[2] The makers of the NEB have issued a pamphlet, *The Story of the New English Bible,* in which they outline its aims and methods, and one of the first things they say is that they intended to produce "a new translation, not a revision of the King James version." This translation was to be in "contemporary English"; it was to avoid "all archaic words and forms of expression"; and it might, when necessary, use freedom "in altering the construction of the original." Accuracy was their first aim; but they realised that a translation which was nothing more than accurate would be "at a disadvantage when set beside the classic English Bible." To reduce this disadvantage

[1] THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE, WITH THE APOCRYPHA. Oxford and Cambridge University Presses (Standard Edition). $9.95.

[2] Later in this review, I shall be making some comparisons between the King James and the NEB versions. But these will be for the purpose of exhibiting the character of the NEB, not proving its inferiority.

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they appointed a "literary panel" whose duty it was to check the productions of the scholars from a literary viewpoint. This panel was "composed of people who were not experts in the biblical languages but who were judged to have a strong sense of English style." Who these people were, and who had judged them to have this "strong sense of English style," the pamphlet does not inform us.

The pamphlet goes on to discuss some of the main literary difficulties of an undertaking like this, produced by an imposing army of the best Biblical scholars in England. How do you get a sense of individuality in a work produced by a committee, whereas all the great translations of the past had been the work of great individual writers? (The King James version, which is often imagined to have been made by a "committee," was in fact overwhelmingly based on Tyndale.) And how, if you are committed to the principle that the entire Bible is to be done into "contemporary English," do you achieve the variety of styles needed for the vast variety of its contents? The NEB met the first difficulty by allotting each book, for the first draft, to an individual translator; and the second difficulty by sending this draft, after the other scholars had made their scholarly corrections, to the literary panel, who then did their utmost to secure "the tone and level of language appropriate."

I found this pamphlet distinctly impressive; it shows a considerable understanding of some of the problems involved and an honest effort to cope with them. But does it face the basic problems? These, as I see it, are two.

The first concerns the work's readers: who are they, and for what purposes is it supposed they will read the Bible? On this, the pamphlet envisages three kinds of readers: first, those who have "no effective contact with the church or any of its communions"; second, the young, "for whom the Bible, if it is to make any impact, must be contemporary";[3] and third, "intelligent people who do attend church, and for whom the traditional language is so familiar that its phrases slide over their minds almost without stirring a ripple." This classification appears to me somewhat artificial, and in any case it makes no effort to consider just why, and in what spirit, any of these readers are expected to read the Bible at all, and to do so through this translation in particular. Roughly speaking, the question is: Do we read it as literature, or as a sacred text? Or is that alternative unreal and unnecessary? On this a recent book, entitled *The Bible as Literature,*[4] may give some help. Its author, T. R. Henn, wonders at the

[3] This is surely a dismal example of that "generalizing about generations," which is a major intellectual curse of our time. It should be fairly obvious that many young readers, those with a strong literary sense, are much more likely to be impressed by KJ than by the NEB; and conversely, that many old people, without that sense, are bored or puzzled by KJ but might be interested by the NEB. The difference is one of education, not of generation.

[4] THE BIBLE AS LITERATURE, by *T. R. Henn.* Oxford University Press. $7.00.

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outset whether his title can ever be justified, and quotes C. S. Lewis's uncompromising rejection of its possibility. "Those who read the Bible as literature," said Lewis, "do not read the Bible"; and again, "It is a book so remorselessly and continuously sacred, that it does not invite, it excludes or repels, the merely aesthetic approach. You can read it as literature only by a *tour de force*."[5] One might refute Lewis's intransigence up to a point, by arguing that his distinction is far too absolute: no one, for instance, would use the "merely aesthetic approach"—it would be simply impossible—towards the *Agamemnon* or *King Lear* or *Moby Dick*: these works demand to be taken, in some sense, as religious works, and don't we take the *Book of Job* in much the same way? I believe, nevertheless, that Lewis is essentially right: there is an incurable difference between the reading of a work of literature with a strongly religious content and the reading of what one regards as a sacred text—as, in fact, the Word of God. And this incurable difference—sometimes, rather, the inability to see it—lies at the root of a great deal of the critical confusion which bedevils all discussions of the "Bible as literature," and therefore of its various translations.

After the NEB's New Testament was first issued, separately, in England, a London publisher produced a useful little selection from the reviews it received.[6] This selection makes it very clear that those who read it "as literature" overwhelmingly condemned, while those who read it "as sacred text" on the whole approved. Henry Gifford's review[7] gives the most trenchant statement of the literary condemnation. His standpoint is one familiar to readers of *Scrutiny*: that contemporary English has been ruined by "an illiterate Press and T.V." and is therefore a medium grossly inferior to sixteenth-century English, which, in Tyndale's case, "thought and felt with the energy of rural Gloucestershire and at its pace"; hence a translation into the latter medium is, as it were, inevitably better than one into the former. Gifford realises that we have here a "cruel paradox": although the translators are "earnest and devoted men, they have damaged the Christian myth," whereas "some that do not believe can yet understand the essential poetry." Which means, expressed more crudely, that an atheist with a literary bent is a better reader of the Bible than a devout Christian without one.

To this the "earnest and devoted" translators might have replied by fastening on the unconsciously revealing implications of Gifford's word "myth." "It's no myth for us," they might have said, "it's the Truth"; and they might have continued their retort by reminding Gifford of the root meaning of "poetry"—something invented, a *fiction*. This retort, indeed, is in effect made in another of the reviews

[5] "The Literary Impact of the Authorised Version," an essay printed in *They Asked for a Paper* (London, 1962).

[6] *The New English Bible Reviewed*, edited by Dennis Nineham (Epworth Press, London, 1965).

[7] Originally in *Essays in Criticism* for October 1961.

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collected in *The NEB Reviewed.* An Anglican priest, Fr. Martin Jarrett-Kerr, cites a Catholic colleague, Bro. George Emery, to the effect that the early Church "started with a lot of small shopkeepers and traders, uprooted displaced persons in cosmopolitian towns, a most unsavoury lot of human materials, without much style and with a very untidy hotch-potch of ideas"; and as for their language, that was just what you'd expect from such people—not "poetic" at all. And sixteenth-century England, suggests Bro. Emery, was by no means "a beautiful homogeneous society with shared values and high literary standards . . . What Tyndale rightly saw [in that society] was decay." Hence, to conclude, the NEB's New Testament "could be defended as precisely a piece of necessary self-denial: a return to the catacombs" (in which places there is no poetry).

This exchange was concerned with the New Testament alone, and there are some significant differences for the translator (I shall look at them later) between New Testament and Old; none the less, the essential issue applies to both. Whatever one's personal viewpoint,[8] it does seem a mistake—and a literary critical mistake at that—to think of the Bible in such a way that one forgets, for practical purposes, why it was originally written—the intentions of its authors—and why it is still read by quite a number of its readers. The mistake is a kind of mistaking of the genre. A sacred text *is* a genre of its own: a good critic recognizes this, even if it does not happen to be sacred for *him.*

The second problem which the NEB's translators have not entirely faced is one that lies at the base of their whole enterprise. Is it perhaps a radical error to translate the Bible into "contemporary English" of any sort? There are, of course, plenty of precedents since the King James version. Not the KJ itself, which was already archaic when published in 1611, since it was based on a work some eighty years earlier, and that at a time when the English language was undergoing one of its periods of most rapid and radical change.[9] Nor did KJ itself receive immediately the unqualified veneration it was to get later.[10] John Selden, in the mid-seventeenth century, made the interesting criticism that it was "rather translated into English

[8] On a subject like this, perhaps I should give my own "personal viewpoint," since it certainly colours my response to the work. It is, then, that of someone who was brought up in the Church of England, is no longer a believer or a churchgoer, but knows very well that he will never recover (or want to recover) from those immensely potent, sometimes lulling, sometimes thunderous, rhythms of Tudor prose which he heard every week through childhood and adolescence.

[9] You can still find, here and there, literary-historical references to KJ as a masterpiece of Elizabethan or Jacobean prose. Nothing could be more ridiculous. It's a masterpiece of late medieval prose; if it had really been made by contemporaries of Shakespeare—by Hooker or Bacon or Donne, for instances—its prose would have been totally different.

[10] C. S. Lewis, in the essay already cited, suggests that that veneration was an aspect of Romanticism. I believe he is right. Think of Ruskin.

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words than into English phrases. The Hebraisms are kept and the phrase of that language is kept":[11] or, as we should put it, it wasn't idiomatic enough. And through the eighteenth century, which on the whole did *not* admire "the Bible as literature," there were various efforts at modernization. There was a splendidly absurd one from Benjamin Franklin (I really don't know if he meant it to be funny), which dealt like this with the opening verses of *Job*:

> And it being *levee* day in heaven, all God's nobility came to court to present themselves before him; and Satan also appeared in the circle, as one of the ministry. And God said to Satan: You have been a long time absent; where were you? And Satan answered: I have been at my country seat, and in different places visiting my friends. And God said: Well, what think you of Lord Job? You see he is my best friend, a perfectly honest man, full of respect for me, and avoiding everything that might offend me. And Satan answered: Does your Majesty imagine that his good conduct is the effect of mere personal attachment and affection? Have you not protected him, and heaped your benefits upon him, till he is grown enormously rich? Try him; only withdraw your favor, turn him out of his places, and withhold his pensions, and you will find him in the opposition.[12]

Another eighteenth-century experiment in "contemporary English" —and this was certainly intended in all seriousness—was produced by Edward Harwood in 1768. His models, as he acknowledged, were the masters of prose in his own day—Hume, Johnson, etc.—and this is how, under their influence, he rendered the beginning of the Lord's Prayer:

> O thou great governour and parent of universal Nature—who manifestest thy glory to the blessed inhabitants of heaven—may all thy rational creatures in all the parts of thy boundless dominion be happy in the knowledge of thy existence and providence, and celebrate thy perfections in a manner most worthy thy nature and perfective of their own! May the glory of thy moral government be advanced, and the great laws of it be more generally obeyed . . .[13]

I find that interesting because it illustrates something of which we shall find examples in the NEB. The quality of the language, intentionally or not, is changing the doctrine. The "Lord" of Harwood's version is unmistakably the God of eighteenth-century Deism, and the manner in which he is to be worshipped is the manner of eighteenth-century Deists: that is what happens when the mysterious, resonant, half-

[11] Cited in *The Bible in its Ancient and English Versions*, edited by H. Wheeler Robinson (Oxford, 1940).

[12] Cited in Robinson, *op. cit.*

[13] Cited in Robinson, *op. cit.*

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rhyming incantation of "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done" is turned into "thy moral government be advanced, and the great laws of it be more generally obeyed."[14]

But, to return to the "contemporary English" of the twentieth century and the NEB, the radical doubt is best expressed by C. L. Wrenn.[15] Wrenn (who was both philologist and Christian) asks the question whether "the basic documents of our faith" really *can* be rendered into the English of our own times. This, he suggests, has lost "the appropriate elements" for expressing "the supra-phenomenal world." Because, in other words, our civilization does not essentially have any belief in spiritual things, therefore its language does not and can not find the right words for them. Wrenn quotes one revealing change. In Mark 8:36—"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"—the NEB substitutes "his true self" for "his own soul." On which Wrenn comments that this change breaks contact, as it were, with the whole tradition of Christian expression, in which "soul," and its equivalents in other tongues (*anima, Seele, âme,* etc.) have for centuries been key-words. For my own part, I would add that just as Harwood's eighteenth-century language changed the Lord of Hosts into the "great governour and parent of universal Nature," so this change transmutes the Redeemer and Messiah into a platitudinous psychiatrist.

In spite of such objections, I am sure that the "contemporary English" of the NEB works a great deal better for the New Testament than it does for the Old. One reason for this is that the life, the society, of Christ's Judaea seems itself a good deal nearer to the contemporary world than that of most of the Old Testament's world. It is quite possible, though no doubt at the price of many distortions, to see Christ's world in very contemporary terms: a poor colony of a ruthless efficient Empire, a protest movement, a nascent nationalism riven by internal splits, and a hippie leader, alternately idolised and persecuted, who repudiates bourgeois respectability and the values of money, family and success. And there is also a linguistic difference between the two Testaments. As Henn points out, the *koiné* (demotic) Greek of the New Testament was a far more mundane language than ancient Hebrew; it was a swiftly changing, everyday lingua franca of the Near East, "constantly borrowing and coining words." Hence,

[14] The Lord's Prayer of Harwood has an effect similar to that of another eighteenth-century modernizer, Bonnell Thornton, whose version was ferociously, though not unjustifiably, parodied by William Blake:

Our Father Augustus Caesar, who are in these thy Substantial Astronomical Telescopic Heaven, Holiness to thy Name or Title, and reverence to thy Shadow. Thy Kingship come upon Earth first and then in Heaven. Give us day by day our Real Taxed Substantial Money-bought Bread; deliver from the Holy Ghost whatever cannot be Taxed; for all is debts and Taxes between Caesar and us and one another. . .

[15] In *The NEB Reviewed.* The review was originally published in *Studia Evangelica.*

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some of Christ's sayings do come across pretty well in the NEB's "contemporary English":

> No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on to an old coat; if he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and leaves a bigger hole. No one puts new wine into old wine-skins; if he does, the wine will burst the skins, and then wine and skins are both lost. Fresh skins for new wine! (*Mark* 2:21)

> No servant can be the slave of two masters; for either he will hate the first and love the second, or he will be devoted to the first and think nothing of the second. You cannot serve God and Money. Therefore, I bid you put away anxious thoughts about food and drink to keep you alive, and clothes to cover your body. Surely life is more than food, the body more than clothes . . . (*Matthew* 6:24-26)

It does come across, as I say; it is at least sharp and clear. But one has to ask next: just what comes across? And the answer must be: a series of ethical precepts delivered by an anti-Establishment talker. Save for their clarity, freedom from hysteria, and total lack of pretentious jargon, they might almost be heard today in Berkeley or San Francisco. But what they are *not* are the Word of the Lord, the utterances of the Son of God. One can hardly imagine that the NEB's translators—all of them devout, and many of them clergymen—intended this effect. They have produced it, nevertheless, because the diction which may be appropriate for rendering the words actually spoken by Jesus of Nazareth is hopelessly unfitted to suggest the Christ who has been the centre of a great religion for nearly two thousand years.

The Old Testament presents a different, and a harder, problem. The trouble here is that so much of the content is irredeemably *primitive:* it relates to stages of human history, and types of human religion and society, as remote from the world of "contemporary English" as the contents of *The Golden Bough.* And "contemporary English" just does not handle the primitive, except through the colourless detatched language of the anthropologist: and that of course is quite useless if one wants to evoke rather than merely describe, to recreate something of the passion and conviction with which these primitive people acted and believed. Tudor English did have some qualities which made it a rather better vehicle for conveying the primitive; Henn points out that the "psycho-physiology" then current (the doctrine of the humours, for example) meant that the language could cope naturally with such imagery as "bowels of compassion" or "her bowels yearned upon her son." But the NEB's English cannot cope: it renders the latter (I *Kings* 3:26) as follows: "moved with love for her child."

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Thus in many places one feels a strange incongruity between content and language, between a relentlessly physical subject-matter and a diction always tending to the abstract and conceptual. On occasions, indeed, it seems as if the translators were dimly aware of this, and their awareness drives the language, willy-nilly as it were, very close to the archaisms which the whole policy of the NEB has repudiated. For instance:

> Thus says the Lord,
> who opened a way in the sea
> and a path through mighty waters,
> who drew on chariot and horse to their destruction,
> a whole army, men of valour;
> there they lay, never to rise again;
> they were crushed, snuffed out like a wick . . .
> I will make a way even through the wilderness
> and paths in the barren desert;
> the wild beasts shall do me honour,
> the wolf and the ostrich;
> for I will provide water in the wilderness
> and rivers in the barren desert,
> where my chosen people may drink.
>
> (*Isaiah* 43:16 etc.)

In what way, that has any significance, is that "contemporary"? Look at "thus," "mighty," "men of valour" . . . But as a rule, one must admit, the NEB sticks grimly to its self-appointed limitation of being contemporary—with the consequence that the primitive element simply disappears.

This is particularly clear in the sexual language of the Old Testament. Here, the NEB seems almost prudish, because of its consistent avoidance of words which inescapably evoke the body. This is the KJ version of Saul raging at Jonathan:

> Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness?

And this is the NEB:

> You son of a crooked and unfaithful mother! You have made friends with the son of Jesse only to bring shame on yourself and dishonour to your mother. (I *Samuel* 20:30)

The NEB always, I think, substitutes "have intercourse with" for "uncover the nakedness of." In *Leviticus* 18:19 it gives this: "You shall not approach a woman to have intercourse with her during her period of menstruation." Perfectly accurate, I have no doubt, and perhaps more comprehensible for many modern readers: but

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where is the primitive horror, the terrible power of a taboo, which the KJ version so strongly evokes?

> And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness, and shall uncover her nakedness; he hath discovered her fountain, and she hath uncovered the fountain of her blood: and both of them shall be cut off from among their people.

There is another passage, in which a change in the sexual diction effects what is virtually a change in the meaning expressed. In 2 *Kings* 9:22, these are Jehu's words in KJ: "What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?" The NEB turns them into this: "Do you call it peace, while your mother Jezebel keeps up her obscene idol-worship and monstrous sorceries?" It thereby loses completely that identifying of sexual with religious aberration which ran so deep in the ancient Hebraic mind—and was later so congenial (disastrously, one may think) to the Anglo-saxon Puritan mind on both sides of the Atlantic. Even the change from "witchcrafts" to "sorceries" has a similar effect: it blurs the link between the Old Testament and such things as the witch-hunts of Salem.

If one looks at the NEB's Old Testament more generally, one sees it guided by a spirit much more cautious and, presumably, more accurate, than KJ and its successors. The result of this, very often, is the extinction or toning down of those baroque metaphors which have filled the English language with idioms and allusions. Thus, in *Job* 19:20, "I have escaped by the skin of my teeth" becomes "my bones stick out through my skin." Two other passages show the effect of this process on literary quality because they happen to have been picked on for comment in Henn's book. Henn, quoting KJ's version of *Job* 30:22—"thou tossest me about in the river of the storm"—compares it with the lines in *Measure for Measure*—"To be imprisoned in the viewless winds/ And blown with restless violence round about/ The pendent world . . ." The NEB, which gives "the tempest tosses me up and down," destroys the point completely by expelling the metaphor in "*river* of the storm." Again, Henn refers to *Psalms* 22:20—"Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog"—draws a parallel between it and I *Kings* 21:23—"And dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel"—and adds the comment: "We must remember the unclean horror of the scavenging dogs of Middle East villages." All very interesting, but, alas, the NEB removes the dog altogether, and gives us: "Deliver my very self from the sword, my precious life from the axe."

In all these passages, the NEB is much less "poetic," the surprising metaphorical "leap" is abandoned, and what we have instead is much more logical and commonplace. Another change demonstrates again how a difference in translation can mean a difference in doctrine.

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One of the most important arguments of Christian theologians in the past—I don't think they make much use of it today—was the argument of prophecy: the argument, that is, that the events of the New Testament were foretold in the Old. And one of the most important passages for this argument was *Job* 19:25-26, which KJ translates as follows:

> For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. . . .

This prophecy of Christ as Redeemer and of the Resurrection of the Body disappears completely in the NEB:

> But in my heart I know that my vindicator lives and that he will rise last to speak in court; and I shall discern my witness standing at my side and see my defending counsel, even God himself, whom I shall see with my own eyes, I myself and no other.

I suppose one may take it for granted that all these and other changes are justified purely on the ground of accuracy. Contemporary Biblical scholarship, like all other kinds of scholarship, is presumably more precise, more scientific, than that of the past; and there is also that old-established principle of textual criticism, which says that the more difficult or the less attractive reading is likely to be the correct one (*difficilior lectio potior*), because people want to change what is hard into what is easy, or what is disagreeable into what is pleasant, but not vice versa; similarly, one feels that the NEB translators would not have made such changes unless they were quite satisfied that they *had* to make them. It begins to look as if, in many places of KJ which we have always accepted in our innocence as faithful translations, we have in fact a critical problem analogous to that presented by such "imitations" or free translations as Pound's and Lowell's. Inspiration or ignorance? Justified by the results, or to be deprecated as a betrayal of the original? One can be sure that the KJ translators did not *mean* to be "poetic" where the original was prosaic, or to produce a translation which they knew to be free for the sake of literary effect. They, no less than the translators of the NEB, were serving what they believed to be the sacred cause of transmitting to the world, unaltered, the utterances of the Holy Spirit. The irony is that a combination of limited scholarship and the nature of *their* "contemporary English" has produced, in many places, something that is both great writing and a betrayal of their own cause.

Finally, what is the real criticism that might be made of the NEB? (One must accept, for the sake of argument, that "contemporary English" for the Bible *is* a possibility; for otherwise the whole enterprise must be just written off as a big mistake.) The real criticism

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might be this. *It's not contemporary enough.* Its English is neither localized nor individualized. It is a kind of lowest common multiple of what is spoken and written by educated people everywhere in the English-speaking world—and therefore *un*like anything actually spoken and written by anyone anywhere. The translators have been too deeply interested in what they were translating and not interested deeply enough in the medium they were translating into. They haven't brooded hard enough over the problem of what "contemporary English" really means: with the consequence that their language is "contemporary" only in the negative sense of containing no archaic or obsolete words.[16] But it has nothing positively contemporary in idiom or rhythm or phrasing. It stands in no sort of relationship with the vital creative writing of the twentieth century—whereas the English of KJ *did* have a real relationship with the vital creative writing of the sixteenth century. Of course that was easier, since so much of the latter, and so little of the former, are conceived in Christian terms and concerned with theological issues. Nonetheless, this difference is vital. It is also the fatal obstacle to the NEB's achieving its object of not being "at a disadvantage when set beside the classic English Bible."

Perhaps the only possible solution would have been something which itself is an impossibility. And that would have been to find one, just one, contemporary writer of genius to do the work, or at least the bulk of it, as Tyndale and Luther did in their times and languages, and thereby set the tone, the rhythm, the pattern, for the others to follow. Such a writer's English, merely by the fact that he was a genius, would be "contemporary" in a deep and living sense, as Shakespeare's English is Elizabethan in ways much more important than syntax and vocabulary. But such a solution is an impossibility because no such writer in the twentieth century would dream of translating the Bible—and even if he did, no church or committee of churches would dream of giving him the assignment.

[16] With a few exceptions, such as "revelry," "mirth," "Lord of Hosts," etc.—which may not be precisely obsolete, but which are certainly not spontaneous twentieth-century usage. And there is one odd quotation from *Hamlet*: "squeak and gibber" in *Isaiah* 8:19. It is "peep and mutter" in KJ.

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J. MITCHELL MORSE

Guslars and Gospelers

I AM LOOKING AT two beautiful pictures in *The Philadelphia Bulletin,* Genie Eichelberger, aged seventeen, the new Miss Montgomery County, hopes to be Miss Pennsylvania, Miss America, Miss World; whatever cups and crowns she wins she will deserve, because presumably she has a rival in every one of the remaining 3,129 counties, parishes and county equivalents in this our dimpled land, as well as formidable competition from Switzerland, etc.; but on another page mine eyes behold the unrivalled one and only possible Mister North Carolina, Mister America, Mister World: Billy Graham. Both are expressions of the same culture, idols of the same cult. But our culture is not all spiked marshmallows and public relations; Bruce Rosenberg, by recording and analyzing some expressions of a less prettified evangelism, has done us all a service for which we should be grateful. *The Art of the American Folk Preacher* is an achievement of a rare kind: the kind that fills a need that obviously needed to be filled, but which before it was filled was so un-obvious that we didn't realize it existed.[1]

Before the invention of recording instruments, the pulpit oratory that survived its delivery was in most cases the kind that was written down beforehand. It had an almost unavoidable formality; in fact, some preachers seem to have been as much infatuated with form as the weak-voiced Isocrates, who wrote "orations" to be read silently as models of construction. The medieval art of preaching, based on the last decadence of Roman rhetoric, is so madly over-ornamented, crowded, stuffed, stiff and rotten with fancy Asianisms—as Shaun said of Shem's house, so "persianly literatured"—that it must have contributed on the literary side to the need for Protestant plainness, even among some of its auditors who knew Latin. Consider the figure *correspondentia,* as explained at length and with examples in Chapter 42 of Robert de Basevorn's quite typical fourteenth-century *Forma Praedicandi*: If the first point in a sermon is to be divided *a, b, c,* the second *d, e, f,* and the third *g, h, i,* the preacher should show correspondences among *a, d,* and *g; b, e,* and *h;* and *c, f,* and *i.* This is done by citing the same or similar Scriptural authorities for *a, d,* and *g,* etc. And consider the gaudy grief of Saint Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) lamenting the loss of his virginity in youth: here, certainly, the form is the only content of any value—so that we don't need to know the English equivalents of the words:

[1] THE ART OF THE AMERICAN FOLK PREACHER, by *Bruce A. Rosenberg.* Oxford University Press. $8.50.

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> Heu! de quam sublimi cecidisti, in quam profundum corruisti! vae! quam benignum contempsisti, quam maligno te junxisti! Quid fecisti, o mentis amentia, amens spurcitia, spurca nequitia, quid fecisti? . . .
>
> Horror mirabilis, quam perversa voluntas! Miraculum horribilis, quam voluntaria perversitas! Unde mihi, Deus, tantae pravitatis correctio? unde tibi, Deus, tanti sceleris satisfactio? . . .
>
> Terror horribilis, dolor terribilis, moeror inconsolabilis, aggregate vos super me, irruite, obruite, perturbate, obvolvite, possidete. Justum est, justum est. . . . Si enim non sum dignus oculos ad coelum orando levare, certe non sum indignus eos vel plorando caecare. . . .[2]

It's gorgeous and I love it, but it certainly isn't spontaneous or natural, and it certainly suggests more art than grief. But how is grief to be expressed naturally? By a howl? Doubtless; but when I read something that bears the name Poetry I want it to be poetry, and if you force me to choose between Anselm's artificiality and some of the howls, roars and mere inarticulate grunts that pass for poetry now, I'm afraid I'll have to opt for Anselm's artificiality. I know it's dead, I know it's insincere, I know it's a product more of industry than of anything else; but it does show a certain minimum skill or verbal competence or brain-power that I miss in our stoned poets, and I have exactly the same objection to the evangelists whose chants Rosenberg has recorded and transcribed. I used to hear such preachers occasionally in my South Carolina adolescence; I thought of the white ones then as fanatics and Ku-Kluxers, and of the black ones as slaves; there was to be sure a great deal of rhythmic frenzy in their performances, but it never occurred to me that I was witnessing poets in the ecstasy of creation; and on the basis of the sermons Rosenberg has collected I still don't think of such preachers as poets; as William James said, when a weak intellect is moved to religious enthusiasm, the utterances that result are of no value except as symptoms or phenomena.

And nevertheless Rosenberg's thesis is valid, because these men compose *in the manner of* poets. They are poets as Bob Hope is an actor and as Taine was a critic: the Goncourts quote a friend of

[2] Oi! From what height hast thou fallen, to what depth hast thou plunged! Weh! What blessedness hast thou contemned, what cursedness hast thou embraced! What hast thou done, O conscious madness, mad foulness, foul wickedness, what hast thou done? . . .

Prodigious horror, what a perverse will! Horrible prodigy, what willful perversity! How, God, can such depravity in me be corrected? How, God, can such wickedness to Thee be redeemed? . . .

Horrible terror, terrible grief, grievous sorrow, overwhelm me, crush me, bury me, shake me, engulf me, possess me! It is just, it is just. . . . If indeed I am not worthy to lift my eyes to Heaven in prayer, surely I am not unworthy to blind them with weeping. . . .

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theirs, and I quote after them from memory: "Taine reminds me of a hunting dog I once had. He sniffed the ground, he ran, he stopped, he pointed, he went through all the motions of hunting to perfection, but he had no nose, and I had to sell him." But dogs with good noses also go through the motions; learning to swim is a matter of learning to make the motions, and good poets use for their purposes the same conventions that bad poets or non-poets use to no purpose. All originality, as distinct from mere nuttiness, is rooted in convention. We become articulate within a convention, and original only to the extent that we master it and can play with it: in order to speak eloquently, we must learn to speak. Freedom is won by discipline. Otherwise it is not we who take liberties with the convention, but the convention that takes liberties with us: it makes us say things we don't mean, simply because we lack skill to say what we mean or even to know what we mean. To the extent that we think with words, we don't know what we mean until we are able to say it. Rosenberg's preachers are fascinating because the simple conventions within which they improvise with the freedom of experts are different from those of literate eloquence: they are oral conventions, rooted in the physiological nature of speech and memory; therefore—and this is Rosenberg's original discovery and what gives his study its chief value—the sermons developed within them, though intellectually negligible, share some of the universal features of epic poetry and thus afford a new point of insight into the nature of all poetic composition. The most valuable treatment of this more general subject remains André Spire's neglected *Plaisir poétique et plaisir musculaire,* but *The Art of the American Folk Preacher* is I think equally valuable as a treatment of its special subject.

It illustrates Enrico Fermi's remark that the lucky accidents always happen in the same laboratories. In literary studies they sometimes happen when an expert in one field steps into another. Rosenberg, a medievalist, tells how this one happened: "The idea first occurred to me when, as a graduate student in Ohio, I would occasionally pick up evangelists' sermons on local radio stations. My first impulse, I must admit, was to turn the dial immediately; but the ear is quicker than the hand, and after a short time—during which I heard parts of several sermons—I thought that I was hearing the same phrases repeated, much as are formulas in *Beowulf.*" He was also able to bring to bear on these chanted exhortations a scholar's knowledge of Milman Parry's and Albert Lord's studies in the 1930's of the *guslars* of Yugoslavia, "supposedly the last remaining singers of oral epics in the West, who accompanied themselves on the single-stringed *gusle,*" but whose art has finally succumbed to the greater advantages of literacy. The enthusiastic cooperation of other scholars, who gave him leads, arranged contacts, and shared ideas, plus a grant from the American Council of Learned Societies, which enabled him to

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travel and buy recording equipment, facilitated the work; the result is literary scholarship of a high order applied to an aspect of folk culture that has hitherto been studied chiefly by condescending charm-hunters and sociological slummers. Far be it from me to deny that evangelistic fundamentalism is an intellectual slum; but the Muse is no respecter of neighborhoods.

The Parry-Lord thesis was that the oral composition of epics, in which the poet composed as he sang, required a stock of ready-made phrases or formulas—"flashing-eyed Athena," "godlike Achilles," "the rosy-fingered dawn," "he spoke to him with winged words"—which could be used in all appropriate situations and which helped the poet to remember and the audience to anticipate. In 1953 F. P. Magoun, Jr., applied this theory to Old English verse and concluded that oral poetry "is composed entirely of formulas . . . while lettered poetry is never formulaic"; and after him a crowd of less imaginative scholars hammered the idea that all formulaic poetry was originally oral into a dogma that distorted their view of one aspect of medieval life; but in 1966 Larry D. Benson disproved it by demonstrating with detailed evidence that many formulaic poems were in fact composed by poets writing in their cells. His article "The Literary Character of Anglo-Saxon Formulaic Poetry," to which I owe this information, appeared in *PMLA* for October 1966; having lost my former intense interest in medieval literature, I didn't read it at the time, and would probably never have read it if Rosenberg had not referred to it; but it bears on the whole problem of the relations between oral and written poetry, and can be recommended to anyone who is interested in the methods of our contemporary plugged-in bards.

Perhaps the leading idea of Rosenberg's book is that chanted sermons owe their quality less to their words or ideas than to their rhythm, tone and melody, and to the responses of the audience: in one way and another he says repeatedly—on pages 40, 44, 47, 69, 72, 76, 83, 93, 99 and 115—that the medium is the message. Certainly the words alone—which in transcription constitute the second half of the book—are in themselves unimpressive, often incoherent, and after a while boring. Comparing them with Anselm's, we sho kin see the advantages of a college education. In view of the importance of the sound effects, I think the Oxford University Press would be doing us a real service, not just playing a fashionable game, if it issued the tapes, including Rosenberg's explanatory headnotes. To follow them with the texts would be enlightening—and fun.

Perhaps his most interesting conclusions—and I find them largely convincing—are that many of the repeated phrases in chanted sermons are probably not formulas after all: that they are probably not remembered but recreated every time they are used; that when they are remembered what is remembered is an abstract pattern of English grammar adaptable to many purposes; that something similar

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may be true of Old English formulaic poetry; and that the catalogues we find so tedious in the printed texts of medieval romances—e.g., the long list of dishes at a royal banquet—were probably among the most popular parts of the performance because they were recited with gestures, licking of lips, groans of gastronomic ecstasy, etc.

Somewhere in *Dog Years* Günter Grass remarks that the wonderful ideas that come to us in a high fever turn out to be no ideas at all when our temperature returns to normal; but certainly they seem wonderful while the fever is on us, and in my adolescence I observed that evangelistic services seem to have a similarly happifying effect on those who participate in them. So do the Beatles' services. So did Hitler's. Saint Anselm, working out the exquisite reasoning of the *Proslogion,* was sometimes rapt into Paradise by the sinuosity of his own logic. There is a serene pleasure in the contemplation of abstract ideas that yield their meaning to our ordinary efforts; but to emerge by an agony of effort from the darkness of incomprehension into the brilliance of a clearly conceived abstraction is to feel the very madness of joy. This is as far as rational thought can go—but for mystics of Anselm's type there is yet a more intense experience: for to experience the meaning of an idea without quite grasping it intellectually—to pass from a state in which we *con*ceive it without *per*ceiving it to one in which we *per*ceive it though we can no longer, for all our efforts, *con*ceive it—this is the ecstasy of mystic union with the inconceivable. It is an ecstasy to which rare spiritual geniuses attain after prolonged intellectual effort; but folk mysticism comes not from intellectual effort—Agnew forbid!—but from the suppression, by means of throbbing rhythm and loud noise, of whatever intellect there may be in the house; folk mysticism is a convulsion of the nervous system up to but not including the medulla oblongata; in our present political danger, when there are large numbers of inarticulate people waiting for a leader to convulse them, folk mysticism is a more significant thing to observe and understand than any intellectual's personal union with Agnew the Father. I therefore hope Oxford will reproduce Rosenberg's tapes. I doubt that many readers of THE HUDSON REVIEW would themselves get the jerks.

Rosenberg's prose lacks felicity: it is stiffly formal but spotted with grammatical errors and inaccuracies of vocabulary. (This is true of most scholarly prose now, at least in literary studies. For whatever reasons, we now have a generation of literary scholars who are not at ease with their native language. Perhaps it is because—their McLuhanism notwithstanding—their style is purely visual and they don't *hear* their sentences.) He is sometimes careless in matters of detail: he consistently spells Pentecostal "Pentacostal," perhaps because the members of that church pronounce it that way, and he consistently calls the A.M.E. or African Methodist Episcopal Church the American Methodist Episcopal Church. In discussing the conversion of the

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slaves to Christianity he implies that there is a distinctive Christian morality—that the Stoic virtues of patience and endurance, for example, are distinctively Christian, and that Christian morality condemns slavery, though Saint Augustine defended slavery with Christian arguments and every theologian from Tertullian to Graham Greene has insisted that what counts for salvation is not good behavior but baptism, correct belief and divine grace: Saint Augustine assures us, in *The City of God,* that the good Socrates, having none of these necessities, is in Hell.

Rosenberg also totally misrepresents the New Criticism, "which held that finished works of literature were not the personal products of human authors intimately related to those works, but autonomous artifacts of eternity which the critic knew as much about as did their creator." No New Critic has ever held any such ridiculous thing. What we do hold is that the quality of a man's work cannot be inferred from his biography but can be demonstrated in his texts by such objective criteria as grammar, rhythm, design, characterization, density of connotation, validity of imagery, etc. If the quality of a text were not objectively demonstrable we could not say with any assurance that Shakespeare was better than Rod McKuen or answer the adolescents who say with the assurance of innocence, "That's a matter of opinion." This is the last extreme of the literary relativism that grew out of the historicism of the biographical-historical or Taine-Sainte-Beuve school. And on the same page Rosenberg makes the common mistake of calling spontaneity creativity—as if an inarticulate grunt were an act of creation. But these are minor flaws in an original and enlightening study.

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WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Shags and Poets

READING THROUGH THE FORTY slim volumes of this quarter brought to mind more than once an as yet uncollected poem by Mr. Kingsley Amis:

LOVELY

Look thy last on all things lovely
  Every hour, an old shag said,
Meaning they turn lovelier if thou
  Thinkst about soon being dead.

Do they? When that 'soon' means business
  They might lose their eye-appeal,
Go a bit like things unlovely,
  Get upstaged by how you feel.

The best time to see things lovely
  Is in youth's primordial bliss,
Which is also when you rather
  Go for old shags talking piss.

Though it doesn't take full account of the poetic revolution as instituted by Eliot and Pound, the poem has a lot going for it: vivid diction, strong line of argument, solid rhyming and a bit of life in the speaking voice. But I want to know when the time is you go for young shags talking piss?[1] The most highly touted one of this batch is surely Francis Warner, "a young English pastoral poet who has been catapulted into international prominence." And about whose poetry C. S. Lewis is quoted as opining that "The use of Pan is very good." This English Pan is also "An Oxford don at the unbelievably tender age of 27" who actually refers to "my piping" (he toots away on the flute), celebrates "Bright apricot, kissed by the sun" and, in "Aubade" opens dramatically with "Hush! Who is it that disturbs my leaden rest." Anybody who can write that way this late in the game surely deserves a measure of international prominence. Perhaps on Warner's "extensive American tours" he met our version of Pan, Michael McClure, who has no trouble saying exactly what he means:

"I AM INNOCENT AND FREE!/ I AM A MAMMAL!/ I AM A WARM-BLOODED SENSORY CREATURE/ CAPABLE OF LOVE

[1] POETRY OF FRANCIS WARNER. Pilgrim Press. $4.95. STAR POEMS, by *Michael McClure*. Evergreen. $4.75/$1.95.

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AND HATE AND ACTION AND INACTION!" or "I have ruined 9 poems attempting/ to translate this simplicity/ to a shape and an image!!" All these ruined poems and many more are now bequeathed to us.

Shags of that sort are easy enough to detect; the game is a bit harder when you encounter something like the following:

> You cantered like a colt across the moon,
> Fawned gratefully upon a lover's breast,
> Scaled waterfalls, rang changes on the tune
> Of love for beasts in caves. Gorgeously dressed,
> You stalked in pride, a magical conceit,
> Through woods with spirits in them, where you changed
> Destruction to delight. Each of your feet
> Was a perfect bird at the end of its bough arranged. . . .
>
> ("For a Dancer")

What is this slightly older shag talking?[2] At the end of the poem "A darkening glance/ Of terror tells the dancer from the dance" but there is no terror in the poem's complacent movement, its general air of self-satisfaction with how gorgeously dressed it is. Though it might be emphasized that academic poems of the sort Peter Davison writes are becoming ever more rare, and in a year or two we may welcome them with eager nostalgia, as with movies starring Jeanne Crain and Dana Andrews. Nostalgia and a heavily retrospective air permeate William Meredith's volume,[3] prefaced by an elegantly thoughtful foreword in which he tells us that although he may not have kept the most promising poems, he has kept the ones "that try to say things I am still trying to find ways to say, poems that engage mysteries I still pluck at the hems of . . ." As the patriotic sailor was heard to say, staring out at the mid-Atlantic, it makes you feel kinda humble and kinda proud. Meredith's poetry has all the virtues: decency, reverence, gravity, quiet curiosity, and there is something very depressing about it all, as of poetry soft at the center:

> . . . Practicing for death I have lately gone
> To that other house
> Where our parents did most of their dying,
> Embracing and not embracing their conditions.
> Our father built bookcases and little by little stopped reading,
> Our mother cooked proud meals for common mouths.
> Kindly, they raised two children. We raked their leaves
> And cut their grass, we ate and drank with them.
> Reconciliation was our long work, not all of it joyful.
>
> ("Winter Verse for his Sister")

[2] PRETENDING TO BE ASLEEP, by *Peter Davison*. Atheneum. $2.95.

[3] EARTH WALK: NEW AND SELECTED POEMS, by *William Meredith*. Knopf. $4.50/$1.95.

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What kind of meal are you cooking? Oh, I think a proud meal tonight. How do you raise your children? Kindly, thank you. It's all too beautiful and shaming to be true, establishing the poet as such a splendid understander, knower and forgiver that a slightly self-congratulatory atmosphere hangs over this poem and the whole volume.

Let it be clear that there are other ways to talk about young or old shags, for example Richard Howard's way in his much-praised recent book on post-1950 American poets.[4] Dedicated to Ezra Pound and W. H. Auden you get the sense that Howard is in touch with the big time; and I'm sure he would take the stanza quoted above as an example of what he calls Meredith's "rueful maturity," or would in general praise "The persistent modesty of this disarming poet." Howard's book is continuously astonishing for the way it advertises the best of all possible cases for each of the forty-one poets written about. Awhile back someone handed me, as a keepsake, an ad quoting a few lines from Donald Finkel's "Hands" which struck me as rather nauseous until I encountered them again, this time quoted by Richard Howard in his account of Finkel:

> The poet becomes a man walking in his City with no other horizon, as Roland Barthes has said, than the scene before him, no other power than that of his own senses; and as Finkel says in one of his latest poems:
>
> The poem makes truth a little more disturbing
> like a good bra, lifts it and holds it out
> in both hands . . .
> Devious or frank, in any case,
> the poem is calculated to arouse.
> Lean back and let its hands play freely on you:
> there comes a moment, lifted and aroused,
> when the two of you are equally beautiful.

I'm not sure exactly what Howard makes of the lines, but since he immediately begins a new paragraph with "How to keep history from hardening into hagiography . . ." I would guess he has been slightly bewitched by Finkel's metaphoric magic. Yet it always seemed to me that a poem was *not* like a good bra (these days the only good bra is a burned bra anyway) and that it didn't "arouse" as freely-playing hands might tend to do. But I may just not be open and responsive enough; so that when Finkel holds out disturbing truth in his new volume[5] it just made me feel sort of lousy:

> With my forehead to the cool white sill
> as I lay vomiting flowers

[4] ALONE WITH AMERICA, by *Richard Howard*. Atheneum. $12.95.
[5] THE GARBAGE WARS, by *Donald Finkel*. Atheneum. $3.95.

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green revulsion rising in waves from
yea deep as my asshole I swore
never and never again to dine on flowers.

A deeply moving sentiment but somehow its expression doesn't fully arouse; perhaps one hasn't intuited the proper amounts of white breathing space between "lay" and "vomiting," or "asshole" and "I." But then I remember from Howard's account of *Answer Back* (Finkel's last book) that it was "nothing less than a somatic epyllion . . . conjugating the whole of nature, of erotic possibility, and of political error," so surely the new volume must be something along these lines. If I were Finkel I would rather go for a critical shag who talked about me like that.

In an as yet unwritten essay on contemporary American poets I plan to discuss their increasingly vivid use of fundamental imagery, as in Richard Brautigan's new volume:[6]

He'd sell a rat's asshole
to a blindman for a wedding
ring.

or in the title poem

Rommel is dead.
His army has joined the quicksand legions
of history where battle is always
a metal echo saluting a rusty shadow.
His tanks are gone.
How's your ass?

There is also a shorter one from which sprang the Women's Liberation Movement:

She tries to get things out of men
that she can't get because she's not
15% prettier.

Brautigan has already attained mythical status so must be something more than what used to be called a wiseguy, but he's at least that, and a clever one. Although his final poem, an apostrophe to "Beautiful high-grade fucking" puts forth a lyric value evidently not subject to satiric contemplation. There is nothing so high-minded as a sex snob: when Ron Loewinsohn tells us how it was with "the weight of your ass in both my hands,/ your head thrown back & thrashing & your lips/ forced open . . ." it's clear no joking around is to be permitted, for we are in the realm of Meat Air, sensations too deep for tears or laughter.[7] But Loewinsohn also moves in less meatier realms, as when he sings to a famous man's wife: "Of course he'll love

[6] ROMMEL DRIVES ON DEEP INTO EGYPT, by *Richard Brautigan*. Delacorte. $4.95/$1.95.
[7] MEAT AIR, by *Ron Loewinsohn*. Harcourt, Brace and World. $5.95.

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you Mrs. McCovey—/ but will the swing of your hips/ replace the swing of his bat?" or takes the time to render a moment with some care:

> The weather clear, late June afternoon,
> the evening seeming to hold back
> for us, coming out of the Adirondacks
> in that failing light we saw
> down in the valley a lake, in a lake's
> shape, so still grey water in what
> light there was, down there among the trees. . . .
>
> ("Lots of Lakes")

The sentence is beautifully laid into the stanza, and you can see the point of all W. C. Williams' talk about how the line must change, the necessity matriculate. Williams, the presiding spirit behind this book, has perhaps helped Loewinsohn to see beyond the quirks of his own spirit. Which is in effect what Robert Creeley praises him for on the jacket, but he seems to me less pretentious than Creeley and does not stutter too much about The Language or The Poem, subjects on which too many shags have talked too much piss recently.

Why not just admit that Williams did certain things as well as they're likely to be done? Why didn't it occur to Daniel Hoffman[8] when he began a poem this way:

> Under flat stones beside the creek
> In their damp small lairs
> The newts are biding
> Their time,
>
> Clenched fronds
> Thrust uncurling
> Through the dead leafmould . . .

that Spring and All had already been observed by the road to the contagious hospital? Surely something more has to be done to a line, before you can call it a line, than Hoffman does here; so that when Richard Howard intones about him "There is, for Daniel Hoffman, at bottom . . . a terrible burden of brutality and fierce participation in an old unreasoning order of nature" I answer, there is only if you ignore the way his not-at-all fiercely participating verse feels as you read, and substitute instead an interpretation of what it really deeply means.

This kind of substituting is wholly unnecessary in the case of two poets new to me:[9] out of an impossible subject, polio, Harold Bond has made some most attractive poems which begin in a Rehabilitation Center with the patient encouraged out of his sulking by doctors who

[8] BROKEN LAWS, by *Daniel Hoffman*. Oxford University Press. $4.95/$1.95.
[9] DANCING ON WATER, by *Harold Bond*. Cummington Press. $7.50. RUINING THE NEW ROAD, by *William Matthews*. Random House. $1.95

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kick out his crutches and talk a lot about what Roosevelt did ("At fifteen/ I know that routine/ and tell them who's/ kidding who, how will I run track again, even Roose/velt couldn't, or anyone/ dumb enough who watches/ people kick out his crutches.") Later on in "HP" (Handicapped Person) we have a tribute to one of the rehabilitators:

> You were always a one to
> call a spade a petunia.
> Your forbidding tongue lashed at
> our vernacular, that the
> iron lungs we tenanted
>
> were not sardine cans: they were
> "respirators". . . .

Bond deals with his affliction by becoming interested in it: to be a ruined man is a vocation and these attractively detatched poems are the proof, also a reminder that it's good to have a subject instead of, like Daniel Hoffman, writing about nothing. William Matthews has subjects too, or at least makes glancing raids on immensities like "Psychoanalysis":

> Everything is
> luxurious; there is no past,
> only an oceanic present.
> You troll along in your glass-
> bottomed boat.
> Parents and siblings lurk
> Among the coral with thick eyes,
> they will not eat you
> if you understand them
> well enough. . . .

and we troll along over relaxed unpretentious breakings of the line. There are good tropes scattered through these poems, as in one about Coleman Hawkins: "When he blew ballads/ you knew one use of force:/ witholding it." Matthews keeps in mind the possibility that poetry can be entertaining and that flexibility in the speaking voice might be a good thing to aspire to.

James Tate's poems are entertaining indeed;[10] reviewing his first volume I characterized him as "sporty" but the jacket quotes emphasize that he is really "surrealist," which is certainly more distinguished. At any rate the new book is filled with sporty surrealist moments that I ruthlessly wrench out of context: "to save time,/ the horses are in the kitchen making soup."; "All day red hatpins fall out/ of the sky, so I fasten/ myself to a tree"; "The drawer full of

[10] THE OBLIVION HA-HA, by *James Tate*. Atlantic-Little Brown. $4.75/$1.95.

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light/ bulbs is locked and the key/ is in Florida/ attached to a kite"; "I am encouraged to swallow/ the Scotch tape. Which/ has nothing to do with *bliss*." Tate can do this sort of thing all night and very well too; he is extremely assured, both within the poetic line, where he never seems to be straining or nervous or pompous, or at the poetry-reading lectern, where students at the one I heard hung on every word with enthusiasm. It's possible that such facility may be too tempting to resist; I was interested therefore in poems which experimented with playing it a bit straighter, particularly one dedicated to Robinson Jeffers and moments in one called "Images of Little Compton, Rhode Island" where a lovely line—"One wanders around a credible hushed town"—could be a motto for a less brilliant but maybe more sustaining kind of writing than Tate has usually engaged in thus far. But *The Oblivion Ha-Ha* surely lives up to its title, with a surprise on every page and a general sense that Tate would ascribe to Robert Frost's assertion at the end of his *Paris Review* interview: "What do I want to communicate but what a *hell* of a good time I had writing it?"

Derek Walcott is a West Indian poet from whose generally intelligent and lively volume the following poem impressed me most:[11]

> Formal, informal, by a country's cast
> topography delineates its verse,
> erects the classic bulk, for rigid contrast
> of sonnet, rectory or this manor-house
> dourly timbered against these sinuous
> Downs, defines the formal and informal prose
> of Edward Thomas's poems which make this garden
> return its subtle scent of Edward Thomas
> in everything here hedged or loosely grown.
> Lines which you once dismissed as tenuous
> because they would not howl or overwhelm,
> as crookedly grave-bent, or cuckoo-dreaming,
> seeming dissoluble as this Sussex down
> harden in their indifference, like this elm.
>
> ("Homage to Edward Thomas")

Or like this sonnet. It's unlikely that any poet can find a way for very long out of absorbed self-contemplation by writing about topography and Edward Thomas; that it can happen at all provokes gratitude. But the first or last two lines of Walcott's poem could well have been written by the contemporary poet who has made the most determined effort to subordinate the self to the firm outlines and non-human natures of things; and Charles Tomlinson therefore runs the risk of being admired, then his book laid down and not picked up again since, as Johnson said about *Paradise Lost*, the want of human interest

[11] THE GULF, by *Derek Walcott*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $5.50/$1.95.

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is always felt. But is this really true? Take the following poem as a motto for Tomlinson's recent volume:[12]

Let there be treaties, bridges,
  Chords under the hands, to be spanned
Sustained: extremity hates a given good
  Or a good gained. That girl who took
Her life almost, then wrote a book
  To exorcise and to exhibit the sin,
Praises a friend there for the end she made
  And each of them becomes a heroine.
The time is in love with endings. The time's
  Spoiled children threaten what they will do.
And those they cannot shake by petulance
  They'll bribe out of their wits by show.
Against extremity, let there be
  Such treaties as only time itself
Can ratify, a bond and test
  Of sequential days, and like the full
Moon slowly given to the night,
  A possession that is not to be possessed.

("Against Extremity")

This is the way of Charles Tomlinson's world, insofar as the magical imperative "let there be" can hold things together. So in the fine poem which opens this volume the solitary swimmer in Chenango Lake at the end of autumn reads the season and reads the lake:

Human, he fronts it and, human, he draws back
  From the interior cold, the mercilessness
That yet shows a kind of mercy sustaining him.
  The last sun of the year is drying his skin
Above a surface a mere mosaic of tiny shatterings,
  Where a wind is unscaping all images in the flowing obsidian,
The going-elsewhere of ripples incessantly shaping.

("Swimming Chenango Lake")

If you can read both mercilessness and a kind of mercy in nature then it is plausible to be against extremity; but only a very distinct person can write this kind of impersonal poetry, a way of saying that there is as much human interest in Tomlinson's best writing as any good poetry needs. I might add that "The Chances of Rhyme," "Logic," "Weatherman," "The View" and the poems mentioned above seem to me the best ones Tomlinson has written since those about Constable and Van Gogh in *Seeing is Believing*.

[12] THE WAY OF A WORLD, by *Charles Tomlinson*. Oxford University Press. $3.75.

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Tomlinson sets himself "against extremity" but of course his poetry is a very extreme affair indeed, like unto nobody else's. James Dickey's extremity as revealed in his new volume,[13] is to me a less attractive matter. Once again faithful Mark Schorer can be found on the dust-jacket (of how many books recently?) praising Dickey's "aesthetic rudeness" which may be a way of describing the ugly and pretentious title of the new collection. Just about anything goes together to make a Dickey poem; all the fooling around and fiddling with The Line—now long, now short, now in-between, now broken-up like this, looks exceedingly like a jolt or intimidation of the reader into the faith that, yes there must be lots of form here, this poet obviously is technically scrupulous. In a similar manner the blank spaces, breathing spaces or whatever, are obtrusively self-indulgent:

> Shook down shook up on these trees they have come
> From moment to this moment floating on in and this
> Moment changes now not with the light for my son
> Has come has come out with one crow floating
> Off a limb back on and off off a limb in other
> Sunlight turning and making him call himself
>
> Blacker then settles back back into the other
> Moment. . . .
>
> ("The Lord in the Air")

By this time if the reader is anything like me he's begun to twitch from one moment to the next. Of course the trick is to create a hushed expectant atmosphere in which you can't say what you have to say quite yet and it will take a good many lines before your marvelous secret is revealed. But James Dickey's secret is no more marvelous than his voice sounds as it carries along from line to line. I find that voice largely monotonous and exceedingly impressed by its own high flights of apprehension, or else, as in "The Cancer Match" ("And I have cancer and whiskey/ In a lovely relation./ They are squared off here on my ground") too daringly shocking in its dumb-ox vigor to be trusted. But at least once (in "Two Poems of Going Home") everything locks into place, "form" no longer becomes something to notice and we read the thing itself. In "Living There" the Father looks in the rooms where he lived as a boy and still lives in imagination, then imagines his own sons:

> . . . And will they come foolishly
> Back to stare at nothing
> But sunset, where the blood flowed and the wagon wheel grew whole
> in the hands
> Of the bald-headed father? Will they look into those rooms where now

[13] THE EYE-BEATERS, BLOOD, VICTORY, MADNESS, BUCKHEAD AND MERCY, by *James Dickey*. Doubleday. $4.95.

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They sleep, and see nothing but moonlight nothing but everything
Far and long
Gone, long gone?

And the even better second poem, "Looking for the Buckhead Boys," succeeds magnificently in bringing back to life a small town complete with Tyree's Pool Hall (now a shoe store) which had an "unimaginable toilet" (as did Kelly's in Johnson City, N. Y.) and many lost and vanished football players named Punchy Henderson or Harmon Quigley. Clearly Dickey is a poet who has to write a lot, make poems longer than you'd think they need be, take the road to excess in hopes of coming out with something just right, as he does at least in these two poems.

I admired Denise Levertov's *The Sorrow Dance,* particularly the sequence about her sister titled "Olga Poems," and it is therefore a depressing experience to read through these new poems where she is at least as excessive as Dickey in self-indulgent spillings-out of every twitch of feeling.[14] There is a reason for all this: "While the war drags on, always worse,/the soul dwindles sometimes to an ant . . .," "O language, mother of thought,/ are you rejecting us as we reject you?": lines from "Interim" sum up the situation. But the language doesn't just reject us; the poet is responsible too, and as these poems drag on, nag on at us, at herself, at how "coarse faces" nominate Humphrey while Biafrans starve, there is a rejection of the language, an admission that since poetry can't save us it is by that token just not quite worth saving itself. Much of the volume reads as if it were—in the title of one long poem—"From a Notebook: October '68—May '69," a poem that begins with a choice laid out for us—"Revolution or death"—which strikes me as no more attractive than comparable slogans:

And yet, yes, there's the death
that's not the obscene sellout, the coprophiliac spasm
that smears the White House walls with its desensitized
thumbs.

Death lovely,
whispering,
a drowsy numbness . . .
'tis not
from envy of thy happy lot
lightwingéd dryad . . .

Even the longest river . . .

[14] RELEARNING THE ALPHABET, by *Denise Levertov.* New Directions. $4.75/$1.75.

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Revolution or death. Love
aches me. . . . *river*
winds somewhere to the sea.

Why wasn't this allowed to remain in the notebook rather than called a poem and published? After Norman Mailer the first three lines sound embarrassing and unfunny. And why should Keats and Swinburne both be misquoted? Because it's truly "from a notebook"? Why "Love/ aches me"? Why should trifling with line-breaks and plentiful employment of ellipses and blank spaces be accepted as the merit badge of true grief? No matter how terrible things are Wordsworth still must be right: the poet's task is to pay homage to "the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which [man] knows, and feels, and lives, and moves." There is no pleasure in criticizing Miss Levertov this way; there is no pleasure in reading these poems.

Homage to the principle of pleasure is paid most grandly by three last books.[15] The title poem from William Stafford's new volume closes with this supposition:

> Suppose an insane wind holds all the hills
> while strange beliefs whine at the traveler's ears,
> we ordinary beings can cling to the earth and love
> where we are, sturdy for common things.

Perhaps a little too inspiring, but placed in the contexts of the other poems you begin to see how these "common things" are not common at all, that like Charles Tomlinson's extreme anti-extremities, Stafford as the believable celebrator of ordinary life must speak through compellingly improvised verse movements. In his note on the jacket he tells us of aspiring towards "non-rhetorical poems, each its own local event, not forced at the reader, but offered simply as what it is." This is very foxy language, especially the use of "simply" and the declining of any forceful design on us. The design is of course to make us feel unforced, simply in touch with the local event proferred for its own sake:

> There was the slow girl in art class,
> less able to say where our lessons led: we
> learned so fast she could not follow us.
> But at the door each day I looked back
> at her rich distress, knowing almost enough
> to find a better art inside the lesson.
>
> And then, late at night, when the whole town
> was alone, the current below the rumbly bridge

[15] ALLEGIANCES, by *William Stafford*. Harper and Row. $4.95. UNTITLED SUBJECTS, by *Richard Howard*. Atheneum. $3.95. THE FIRE SCREEN, by *James Merrill*. Atheneum. $3.95

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at Main Street would go an extra swirl
and gurgle, once, by the pilings;
and at my desk at home, or when our house
opened above my bed toward the stars,
I would hear that one intended lonely sound,
the signature of the day, the ratchet of time
taking me a step toward here, now, and this
look back through the door that always closes.
("A Gesture Toward an Unfound Renaissance")

There is a real point in not beginning each line with a capital letter, in depending on "There was" and "I would" as both less and more than local specificities, in the illusion of the final six lines that the movement is wholly natural, the way it was, inevitably riding over from one line to the next. The current below the rumbly bridge at Main Street swirling and gurgling might seem a real small town U.S.A. verity but in the poem it feels strange and unaccountable, just as "once" is strangely set off by comas after "gurgle." So it is grace and elegance of movement which (in Williams' terms) "forces belief" and makes it seem unforced: and Stafford's poetic grace is accurately defined by the closing lines of his poem "Observation Car and Cigar":

. . . Like a camera that
believes, he follows an arch into faded
authentic scenes that bring something presented again
and yet all new: traveling, our loves are brought
before us and followed securely into a new evening.

The most outstanding recent example of poetry that brings "faded authentic scenes" into new vivid relief is Richard Howard's book, for which nothing in his criticism or previous poetry prepared me. *Untitled Subjects* is made up of fifteen poems, monologues spoken by or about great nineteenth-century reputations: Scott, Ruskin, Thackeray, Wilkie Collins, Macaulay, William Morris and it is likely that a poet who makes energetic use of Scott's journals or reminiscences of Macaulay will have a lot going for his poems. But Howard's inventive brilliance lies in choosing and weaving anecdotes, famous remarks (not all that famous, most of them) into seamless and entirely credible narrative voices. The escape from personal lyric pleading about this and that, à la Denise Levertov, or James Dickey, is especially welcome since nothing has been lost: Howard's self operates most warmly, amusingly and powerfully through its imaginative identification with these men who left such marvelous achievements and rich trails of gossip behind them. I would not hazard much about the "technique" of these poems because it seems so unobtrusive, so little an object of interest independent from the substantial fact of communicated life. When Howard has Louisa

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Trevelyan write to her son George sending him excerpts from Macaulay's letters, we get this:

> "An American writes
> from Arkansas, very civil
> but, by some odd mistake, directs
> to me at *Abbotsford.*
> Does he think all Britishers who write books
> live up there together?"

One thinks about Macaulay, and Scott (who has spoken a previous poem), not about the verse line or Mr. Howard; and our confidence and security become such that, at the end of the last and finest poem in the volume it seems entirely inevitable that Mrs. William Morris should make the following plea, asking her daughter with reference to certain papers

> . . . Will you
> do as I say, save it all—
> the rest of the things are mere images,
> not medieval—only middle-aged:
> lifelike but lifeless, wonderful but dead.
> These are mine. Save them.
> I have nothing save them.

A plea which the poems in this book most resplendently heed.

In response to someone's question about why, when Swift admired the ideal manifested in the Houyhnhnms, he still made jokes about them, his biographer commented that, well, Swift was a joker. It occurs to me that perhaps more contemporary American poets should be jokers, and looking back over the volumes commented on here I see how few of them are. Richard Howard's book however is a mine of rich Victorian jokes; and James Merrill's is filled with contemporary ones which makes the high lyric moments that much more exhilarating. Not only jokes but music too, and I was moved doubly to wonder why music doesn't bulk larger in the lives of our poets, worried as so many of them are instead about getting some thin "music" out of chopping up the line in grim-faced ways. James Merrill's stunning gifts of rhyme also separate him from many (though not from Lowell or Wilbur) and I am most moved by those poems in his new book which put together joke, rhyme and music as in these passages about two Sopranos in "The Opera Company":

> The rival sopranos sang on alternate evenings
> The maid of one was sent
> To fumigate the prima donna's dressing room
> After the other had used it—who retaliated
> By praising everything about the first:

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Technique, beauty, age.

Later on the narrator thinks back to them:

> . . . Of the rivals
> One is old now, one dead.
> And I had never heard before today
> The LP on whose cover my two loves
> Wonderfully smiling have linked arms.
> It's of some Brahms duets cut lord knows when
> And issued with regrets for low fidelity.
> What is my happiness, my dismay?
> Lightly the needle touches my spinning heart,
> The voices soar and mix, will not be told apart.

The way a phrase like "low fidelity" opens up a joke here, the absolute assurance of all those monosyllables and one "duets" in the matter-of-fact Brahms line, the pleasure in using "LP" just as easy as that, then the beautiful surprise of that clinching couplet bring the whole soul of this reader into activity. As happens in "Matinees," which belongs in the highest class of other Merrill poems like "An Urban Convalescence," "A Tendancy," "Time," and "The Thousand and Second Night." "Matinees" begins with the narrator invited by Mrs. Livingston to see *Das Rheingold.* He arrives late, is sat down beside her and suddenly—there it is: "The entire proscenium/ Is covered with a rippling azure scrim./ The three sopranos dart hither and yon/ On invisible strings . . ."

> Until with pulsing wealth the house is filled,
> No one believing, everybody thrilled.

Again the splendid strong rhyme, compacting all there is to be said about opera, certainly about *Das Rheingold.* The poem moves through celebrations of other matinees and remembered performances, makes a marvelous stern joke about those who succumb to them ("What havoc certain Saturday afternoons/ Wrought upon a bright young person's morals/ I now leave to the public to condemn"), then brings the point strongly home:

> The point thereafter was to arrange for one's
> Own chills and fever, passions and betrayals,
> Chiefly in order to make song of them.

But not leaving it there, he now addresses his lover, the lines shorten, the voice grows a bit more brittle, wistful: "You and I, caro, seldom/ Risk the real thing any more. . . ./ Enough to know the score/ From records or transcription/ For our four hands." And this fully conceited, wholly serious address eventually modulates back into a closing letter to dear Mrs. Livingston ending:

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I play my record of the Overture
Over and over, I pretend
I am still sitting in the theatre.

I also wrote a poem which my Mother
Says I should copy out and send.
Ever gratefully, Your little friend . . .

There are poems in this volume I don't fully understand, a few I haven't gotten at all yet, others with a bit too much Ouzo and Knossos for my uneducated tastes; but at his best James Merrill seems to me a matchless poet, no more adequately understood as an aesthete than as a romantic, or a poet of the dark dream, a farceur, a classicist of technique. Why not most certainly a poet who has more of an ear, makes better song out of his chills and fevers than others; who by the same stroke has verbal gifts to the degree that he can't help making more jokes than others imagine possible or proper? And who fills Frost's definition of the poet "as a man of prowess, just like an athlete . . . a performer." To which, as spectators, we can respond appropriately: no one believing, everybody thrilled.

Note: Speaking of Frost (the best joker of a poet we have produced), I should mention that his publisher has brought out an edition of the poems, complete now with *In the Clearing* added.[16] What the publisher has also done is to have the poems edited (unlike say the poems of Eliot, or Stevens, or Yeats) by a man who, along with providing us with extensive bibliographical information about variants, editions etc. has seen fit to make many emendations in the text of the poems. So that, one illustration having to suffice, when you come across the famous lines: "Whose woods these are I think I know,/ His house is in the village, though" you may, knowing the poem well, wonder whether you'd remember that comma before "though." In fact there has been no comma before "though" in previous editions. What this does to the tone of this line, and what other emendations (should we call them *creative* emendations?) do to other lines, the reader of this chronicle is invited to try out for himself. Along with that letter to your congressman you then might consider writing a note to Holt, Rinehart and Winston telling them what you think.

[16] THE POETRY OF ROBERT FROST, edited by *Edward Connery Lathem*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. $10.95.

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ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS

The State of the Dean

WHAT GOOD IS THE APPARATUS of humanistic scholarship, where in the world does it get us? Editions pile up on editions, monographs and studies and biographies and bibliographies and autographs and holographs and variants and influences and parallels and backgrounds and foregrounds and patterns and insights and outlooks and interpretations, interpretations, interpretations—and footnotes! the very thought of the footnotes sets our head swimming through a milky way of six-point superscripts, *cf.*'s and *op. cit's.* Through which we peer myopically at the shimmering distant outline of the man who stirred up all this fuss by once writing something. The recent bibliography of scholarship concerning Jonathan Swift is a case in point. He was a public figure and the subject of intense interest, commentary, and gossip for the last forty years of his life; there has never been a period since when he was not being scrutinized, analyzed, criticized. Yet in the last twenty years alone, it seems likely that the total volume of things written about him has at least quadrupled. And not only things written about him—things written *by* him. A scholar resident in Australia or Manitoba can know more about him today than any of his most intimate contemporaries could conceivably have known. Any good research library has, for instance, the full text of his private diaries, all his correspondence, all his widely scattered poetry, all his fugitive papers, all his private annotations on various books, a full and careful listing of everything he did and didn't write. Hardly any of his major prose has not been the subject of at least one full-length study, and the commentary on some of them (not always the most interesting) is at least a hundred times more voluminous than the original text. The quantity of critical discussion involving this detail of his writing, or that, is absolutely overwhelming; a man could read in the published Swift-literature from year's end to year's end without coming in sight of the end of it, and probably without advancing himself appreciably toward a coherent view of Swift's mind and art. Perhaps, if he had a coherent view of Swift's mind and art to start with, he might get out of his reading some evidence to support or modify it—but only at the cost of working his way through an enormous amount of irrelevant and extraneous material, overlapping and blurring patterns, interpretive muddle. He would have to fight every inch of the way. Synthesizing the many particular things we now know about Swift, without watering them down to obtuse or flatulent platitudes is

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clearly a major problem, and so far the synthesizing books haven't handled it at all well.

Interpretive problems advance upon us in heavy armor as we venture into Mr. John Clark's lamentably-titled volume on *A Tale of a Tub;*[1] and, as it represents a critical *Iliad* in a labyrinthine nutshell, perhaps we'd better concentrate on its first chapter. Mr. Clark is here concerned with interpreting two paragraphs in Section IX of the *Tale* (the "Digression on Madness"), those in which the subtle knaves who look beneath the surface of things are contrasted with the superficial idiots who remain complacently content with surface appearances. Four possibilities occur among the conceivable arrangements of value in this scene; either the reader is supposed to see the superficial approach as preferable to the subtle; or the subtle as preferable to the superficial; or both alternatives as equally undesirable, *tout court;* or both alternatives as undesirable, but with an implication that some third alternative is more desirable than either. The problem is one of evidence. It is confused by the fact that Swift in this passage is speaking through the mask of a "Hack" who is both superficial and subtle—that is, he pretends to be unspeakably profound and is actually appallingly obvious. So the question is, how and where does Swift propound the "third alternative" that Mr. Clark finds in the passage? When we read Mr. Clark, we are by no means at a loss to define this third alternative: it is an option in which the sane mind "elects to pass its life in adherence to the 'common forms' which compose 'the pattern of human learning' —the vast accumulation of value and experience that distinguishes the historical sense, and, indeed, that renders any sort of civilization possible" (p. 17). Now the quoted sections of this passage are in fact part of the two paragraphs that Mr. Clark is trying to explain: they are part of the description of the superficial man, who adheres to the common forms. In other words, the "third alternative" which Swift is said to recommend and represent is indistinguishable from one of the two alternatives that he is said to reject—except for the addition of numerous honorific extrapolations on the part of the critic. Let any doubtful reader inspect the original passage in the *Tale* for himself, and see if he can find a "third alternative" expressed. Perhaps Swift meant it to be inferred, or thought it so obvious that a reader would supply it for himself; quite certainly he did not mean to recommend "seriously" either superficiality (which he thought superficial) or deep learning (which he thought pretentious and fraudulent). The point is that he didn't *represent* this middle view or third alternative at all, the view that Mr. Clark, like all the conventionally-minded critical moralists, thinks he ought to have represented, must have represented, and therefore—somehow—did

[1] FORM AND FRENZY IN SWIFT'S TALE OF A TUB, *by John R. Clark,* Cornell University Press. $8.00.

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represent. It isn't there, just as the intelligent, moderate *via media* which Martin is supposed to represent in the *Tale* proper, by contrast with the assorted knaveries of Jack and Peter, doesn't really get dramatized, or incarnated, or—in fact—represented. I'm not questioning that Swift, as the mind controlling for its own ends the *Tale of a Tub,* believed in the values of the Church of England, and intended to celebrate them; it's just that his special way of celebrating them was to assail satirically Rome and Geneva, with such vehemence that some people felt he was effectually assailing Christianity itself. They were doubtless wrong; but they were not wrong at all in feeling that this author and this book offered less positive affirmation than they were used to. And Mr. Clark is not right (as the present reader judges the matter) in puffing up a middle-of-the-road position to be attributed to Swift as a positive affirmation—when in fact the text yields little or nothing of the sort.

Mr. Clark goes on to say not only that Swift in Section IX of the *Tale* endorses a mean between reason and passion (I think he would be embarrassed to say just where Jonathan Swift signed on *that* dotted line), but that this mean represents a higher social and ethical value which numerous critics (fifteen are cited on p. 8 alone) were somehow unable to perceive. "At their very heart, the credulous and curious man function alike—dependent upon a basic subjectivism and selfishness that spreads both in the mind and the state like a stain. . . . Credulous and curious man alike are ignorant: what they ignore is precisely that social and moral sense of responsibility to something outside themselves embodied in the more classic view of man" (p. 33). I don't think this construction will stand up long enough for a second look. To be sure, superficiality and pretension to "deep" learning are both "modern" failings, and so to be contrasted with the authenticity of the ancients; and if the passage made that connection, we should not find the slightest difficulty in it. But it doesn't. The classic virtues may be virtues, as true Christianity is indeed an authentic solution to the problems of eithteenth-century England; but they are so remote, so impractical, so incompatible with present schemes of wealth, power, and value, as not even to enter the picture.

I've thought it worth while to hack out the interpretive details of a passage like this only because it illustrates how Mr. Clark has allowed scholarship and commentary to encroach upon, and almost suffocate, his text. Swift's passage says nothing whatever about the "social and moral sense of responsibility to something outside themselves embodied in the more classic view of man." As a matter of fact, Swift would have dropped dead of thundering apoplexy before permitting himself to pen a phrase like that. But the critic extracts it from some other parts of the book, ekes it out with conventional wisdom, and applies it here, in this particularly cottonwool form, to

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interpret a tough passage into a suitable soft one. Or again, he reminds us in a long excursus that the Theophrastian character-collections often included portraits of a credulous and a curious man, drawing from this fact the implication that these characters are related to one another in the *Tale* in the same way and to the same effect as they were in the Theophrastian tradition. But of course they clearly aren't; Swift uses them in a specially taut and working way which entices the reader into thinking he's siding with sanity and good sound sense (as against eccentric, esoteric subtlety), and then pulls the rug out from under him by equating this sound sense with stupidity. The critic's erudition in secondary sources and peripheral materials has been used to obscure his text.

It wouldn't be fair to say or imply that this obfuscation is altogether characteristic of Mr. Clark's procedures; his second chapter works much closer to the text, and in effect endorses a view of the book which his first chapter denied, i.e., that the *Tale*'s characteristic action is an inconclusive struggle between opposed absurdities, a foolish flight followed by a ridiculous fall, inflation and collapse. And increasingly, as he gets away from the scholarship, the analogues, and the background materials, Mr. Clark is able to see the work itself more clearly. There is, perhaps, a little more fancy terminology, a little more agon, persona, mimesis, and peripety than will be to everyone's taste. But our critic has many bright and useful things to say about the operation of Swift's glittering, edged machinery. Writing about only a single book, as he has undertaken to do, and digging himself deep into the secondary literature that has overgrown it, Mr. Clark has perhaps allowed himself too little access to some of Swift's short-range targets. Locke, Toland, Tindal, and the participants in the "Socinian" controversy have a relevance to Swift's satire that one would never guess from reading Mr. Clark's analysis; and Swift's very peculiar standing in the ancients-versus-moderns quarrel (knowing little or no Greek, he was engaged in defending the ancients from the supreme classical scholar of his day) could have been used to point up more sharply certain distinctive qualities and commitments of his mind. Mr. Clark, like most of his authorities, is more concerned to put the book in a philosophical milieu than a polemical one; perhaps this is why he gives us, in the end, a more middle-of-the-road Swift, writing a less angled and nasty book, than some of us feel entitled to.

Denis Donoghue's new introductory study[2] is of a precisely contrary disposition; it is one of those "fresh looks" at an author which are achieved by reading a relatively few critics in balance with, or even in opposition to, the basic texts, and assessing the character of one's author's mind decisively and anew. I don't suppose anyone can

[2] JONATHAN SWIFT: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION, *by Denis Donoghue*, Cambridge University Press. $7.50.

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read Mr. Donoghue's rapid, rippling first chapter without a striking sense of renewal and rediscovery. It isn't precisely that he contradicts positions taken by Mr. Clark, for he expressly concedes that the *Tale* is one of the works in which ironic use of a mask-figure predominates. Yet he begins with the blunt and practical assumption that Swift doesn't have a very elaborate or interesting philosophical position—that his mind (in terms of belief) is limited, practical, literal, and quite short-range. His account of the *Tale* is built much less on "what it says" than on the verbal pattern of saying it—and I think this approach gets us much closer much quicker to the ways in which the book is distinctive. The play that the *Tale* makes with the very form of a book, the way in which its speech slithers into and out of the mouth of a conscious spokesman (inconsistently!), its knack for making us sense the disintegrative and dissociative power of wit—all these are deftly caught; while at the same time this gift for appreciating Swiftian irony is finely balanced against a sense that Swift frequently is not an ironic, not a satiric author at all. He was in fact (though Mr. Donoghue doesn't put it exactly this way) untouched by romantic expectations, and didn't think that a widened field of consciousness or a subtle balance of ironic equivocations was necessarily a Good Thing in itself. When he praises limitation = stupidity, he isn't necessarily kidding.

Mr. Donoghue's style being agile, informed, and contemporary, he handles Swift's mind like an Amsterdam jeweler displaying a gem—turning it over and over, putting it under different lights, pointing to its characteristic fires, patterns, colors, and flaws. When he talks of Swift's passion for negation, or the way in which he manages the concept of *getting rid of things,* a reader who knows the texts will be refreshed by the way in which a lot of disparate observations fall into a clear pattern, a lucid model. Summary criticism can do this; it tells you enough about the author so you can key in on him and find out a lot more on your own. And Mr. Donoghue is a marvel at this sort of work.

Occasionally, I confess, his argument seems to get a little loose in the weave. This happens mostly when he's applying someone else's insights to his own readings of the texts. Just as an instance, it may be true, as Marshall McLuhan has said, that until late in the seventeenth-century a point of view in prose was impossible. Mr. Donoghue not only accepts this dictum, he builds on it, to the effect that Swift's prudence in advancing from one point of view to another, comparing as he goes, is somehow related to the fixity of the printed word. Well, now. I think if we're going to have arguments like this at all, they have to be made more thoroughly. Is there anyone in the vicinity who *doesn't* advance prudently from one point of view to another? Let's say Sterne, just for the sake of argument. (A grumbling little voice in the back of my mind keeps saying why, why, why doesn't Apuleius

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or St. Augustine or Montaigne make use of a point of view in prose? but we'll crush it down.) At any rate, if Sterne is somehow unlike Swift in this respect, is it because of a different attitude toward the fixity of the printed word? Wasn't the printed word just as fixed for Sterne as for Swift? Was there anybody around who didn't write for printers, against whom the generalizations could be checked? (Maybe Thomas Traherne, whose writings didn't undergo Gutenberg's contraption till the twentieth century.) To be perfectly plain, I'm not saying the argument is specious or the observation about Swift wrong; just that, to be convincing, the discussion needs filling out. It is, of course, clearly labelled a speculation. But if we're speculating, I'd just as soon speculate that the history of the seventeenth century (the rise of nonconformity, Erastianism, and free-thinking, the incorporation of them into an alliance under the name of Whiggery) was more responsible than movable type for Swift's special cold *méfiance*. You couldn't very well be an Anglican clergyman after 1688 without a suspicion that in the new society the Lord's prayer could be converted into a club to beat you, and the beatitudes into a social engine to dispossess you, at a moment's notice. The rising tide of purse-proud bourgeois with their stockjobber's jargon and commercial morality, their sectarian cant and restless, projecting spirit, drove Swift back on an empty, arrogant ecclesiasticism from which he maneuvered, not so much cautiously as desperately, and within a very short range indeed (as Mr. Donoghue observes). There was a great scene in the old movie *Beau Geste* that reminds me a bit of Swift's strategy of desperation; it occurred when the last surviving defenders of Fort Zinfandel propped up their dead comrades in the embrasures to give the impression of a full garrison, and then rushed from corpse to corpse, firing over the shoulder now of one and now of another.

So there are details in Mr. Donoghue's book, as in anyone's, where the impulse makes itself felt to stop and carp; but there are plenty of other passages where a quick phrase, a sudden gesture of compression, makes one want to stop and applaud. When he points out, almost in passing, how precious for Swift is the distance between subject and object, he is brilliantly right; and his book is studded with insights that put Swift in sharp profile. Socially, psychologically, linguistically, stylistically, he emphasizes the hard, clear, limited quality of Swift's mind. Perhaps the best thing one can say about Mr. Donoghue's little book is that a student who has read and understood it will be equipped to plunge into the ever-flowing stream of "the literature" and make some sense out of it. There aren't many books about Jonathan Swift of which one could say as much.

Matthew Hodgart's little April-fool joke, based on the Cornell student riots of 1969, takes the form of a return voyage by Gulliver to the land of the Houyhnhnms, in the course of which the captain

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discovers a new state of liberal horses and revolting Yahoos.[3] Mr. Hodgart has, in other words, used Swift's Houyhnhnms as stalking-horses for his own view of the American student movement. It's a remarkably dim view, though surely not as dim as Jonathan Swift's would have been. Professor Hodgart's low estimate of the new campus styles won't come as much of a surprise to guilty faculty liberals, who are always eager for someone to spank them with a good stiff hair-brush, but it may startle a few of the sweet kids whose radical innocence is proof against the very suspicion that a noble savage can look, in certain eyes, like a dirty ape. One wonders how much of this pseudo-innocence is due to the assumption, happily fostered by the "social sciences," that life consists of a set of "problems" which can be quickly and permanently solved without knowing any history. Formulas as trite as "love," "freedom," or "justice"—the moral categories—apparently entitle one to ignore both the tangled roots of the past and one's own hideous intent. But there's so little else for a self-respecting person to be these days, except reactionary, that I forbear developing the argument. Mr. Hodgart's little booklet is, I think, weakened as an entertainment by the circumstance that his horses are as vicious as his apes. This gives Gulliver a somewhat righteous tone which Swift was able to avoid. There's also a flavor of the arch about his quotation-games which falls short of our sense that, in Swift at any rate, serious stakes were being played for. But he has followed Swift's own example in shooting at any target that moves and in disdaining no joke, however low, that presents itself. As an antediluvian Cornellian myself, I think I recognize (under allusive pseudonyms) several of the victims of Mr. Hodgart's poisoned arrows, though wild horses—or, for that matter, wild Yahoos—wouldn't get me to talk about them in public. Scholarship, literary scholarship, however, is a different matter; an annotated edition of the Fifth Book of *Gulliver* may not be as far off as we think, and it wouldn't be hard to fill in certain blanks at that time. On the other hand, the self-esteem of a lot of people is involved; no doubt they all have their ways of reading the new fable, so that they look good and the others bad. If Mr. Hodgart doesn't want his little joke to be festooned with false interpretations, esoteric allusions, and "background" studies of dubious relevance, he'd better deposit an annotated copy of his own in the British Museum, with a notarized affidavit in sextuplicate, and a triple whammy on the wretched scholar who presumes to go against his intent.

[3] A NEW VOYAGE TO THE COUNTRY OF THE HOUYHNHNMS, being the Fifth Part of the Travels into Several Remote Parts of the World by Lemuel Gulliver, edited from an unpublished manuscript by *Matthew Hodgart, M. A.* Putnam's. $2.95.

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Report

From an Egyptian Diary

ALEXANDRIA IS COLD AND WET and maritime, the wind drives down the streets. The top-floor balcony of the hotel hovers over the windstorm and the driving rain; lines of surf crash all along the shore below, surging up here and there over the pavement. In cheerful shabby restaurants one can find the delectable *hameema,* pigeons stuffed with green wheat.

The port is prohibited, but there are deep grottos with Ptolemaic tombs, massively rough-hewn bulky heavy-kneed statuary, and numerous descending chambers; there are some surface ruins, very expensive to enter; conglomerate and indeterminate, with a re-erected column and a sphinx. As in Cairo, all the bourgeois apartment buildings are falling apart; lifts and services long ago gone, but stairs also crumbling, and water and electricity failing; bathrooms as memorials to the past. The inevitable sets of gilded, curved-leg Louis furniture; Brussels carpets, gimcrack porcelains. Another apartment overlooks what had been the racetrack; inhabited by bachelors, who linger all day in dressing-gowns as on holiday; send out for everything; the services of ladies are available. . . .

Though the Greeks and the Jews are all gone, the middle class is surprisingly numerous in Alexandria and Cairo. They cling to their apartments and their educations and their gilt furniture; French is their language; what they have is in savings bank accounts which are constantly being eroded by the progressive worthlessness of the currency. Doctors are the best off; some lawyers survive on the struggles of the middle class to hold on; but there are visits in the night, interrogations. The young, the students, of middle-class background, are violent in their hatred of Nasser; "dictator" is the word they use, cursing beneath their breath. Alexandria, a middle-class city, Europe-oriented, with memories of trade, is full of Nasser-hating young people, eager for contact with the west.

In Cairo the city poor absorb everything; they are happy; one goes every night to a different rooftop wedding celebration above the bazaars; they are as they have always been, untouched by the west; the middle class is tiny, almost invisible outside its quarters of crumbling apartment blocks. Vestiges of it, former canal pilots, former merchants, will appear in European suits in the Semiramis hotel lobby, but unable to sit long, unable to buy more than a single coffee. A friend comes up from Luxor to marry his first cousin; there is a party on the gilt settees, a fine library is visible. His brother, an instructor in the Cairo schools, has given up the middle class; he lives in a squalid

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rented room in a working-class tenement; his friends are all happy and vivacious—a railway conductor, a policeman, a dancer at wedding parties, students not ready for jobs and living with families. He is accepted by them as an equal; he has no middle-class identity.

The tenements are rented by floors, at low fixed rentals, to families; these in turn rent out the rooms at illegally high prices. He is lucky to be on the top floor, but there are almost no services; a naked electric bulb, almost no toilet, almost no water; no sheets; a dirty mattress with a rough cotton blanket; sometimes there are two to a room; rusted wire hangers for possessions; belongings are stolen; people disappear back into the provinces. There is no privacy; the slums are like a club. You enter everyone's house and join everyone's family at will; we signal across the streets to other balconies and other rooftops; messages are exchanged. Lack of possessions and lack of a future give a zest to the present; there are no worries and there are no savings; the past does not exist. In a population without savings and deprived of both possessions and expectations, but with enough to eat and a great deal of leisure, there is a feeling of security and stability, and great enjoyment, great vivacity and gaiety—each day holds new discoveries and new entertainments. In stripping the population of both its possessions and its material hopes, Nasser has unwittingly, at least in Cairo, created large areas of happiness among those of the people who had nothing to lose. The long faces belong to the former middle class, and to the rising, competing officialdom of the new order.

The moral seems to be: stay on the bottom, in these new, classless, state-controlled, mass-oriented, dictator-worshipping societies, and you will be happy. Wear your Nasser button (as does my friend), live in your tenement, get your food rations, be happy; there is no tomorrow. Unquestionably there are psychological benefits unknown to the west. The lack of anxiety—what need for pills? Why compete? What is there to struggle for?

Of all peoples, the Egyptians are perhaps the most generous to foreigners. One can enter any small stall, any small hand-workshop in the vast labyrinth of the Cairo bazaars, unchanged since the nineteenth century, and be given tea, presented with gift examples of whatever handicraft they are practicing; if one stops more than half an hour (they delight in gossip, teasing and pranks) one is not invited for dinner, but dinner instead is set before one; if one partakes, one is asked to leave the hotel and come live and sleep with them in the back of the shop. In Alexandria a grease-covered man with one or two young assistants works in a tiny, grimy stall repairing motors in the chill rain; surrounded by old piston rings, dripping crankcase parts, filthy used tires. A pause to talk produces an invitation; it is nearly lunchtime, and off we go to the ornate splendor of a pretentious rococo Louis-furniture flat; and in it, his grown and idling family. This is all that is left, this repair business that he can operate himself; all else

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has been swept away. They all ask: why should I pay for a hotel, when I can stay here with them? The bathroom still works, in a way. The fat ladies, in false jewelry, anxious in fussy black rayon dresses, look on hopefully. . . . One son is avid for sports, but runs around. Another studies, but. . . .

It is hard to find out exactly what sports the sports-loving son favors. He is tall and thin, vivid and active. He crosses the sea-front boulevard in the driving rain to sit by hours in the evening in a dreary state-owned cafeteria above the beach, holding hands in complete silence and gazing into the eyes of a commonplace prostitute several years his senior. His family wonders where he is. The waves and the rain act in the muck outside the windows. The son who studies is a bundle of silence and solitude. He stands at street-corners in the dilapidated center of town, watching the dilapidated traffic. He has no money for cinemas. Many of the central district buildings have cornices carved of stone or wood at the sixth or seventh story. Outside my balcony in the faded hotel chunks of the rhetorically carved stone consoles are missing. It is a sheer drop of seven stories to the busy seafront sidewalk below.

Anxious, competitive officialdom gathers at Aswan, where a different set of values persists. The rising, sharp-featured young Nasserite officers are here in hordes because a visit from Russia's Brezhnev is imminent; he will inspect the Dam. Every official who believes he has a career has come down for the visit; not to be seen means that you are not important enough to be asked. They come at their own expense, carrying long envelopes and portentous briefcases. Here amazingly, for these are the holidays at the end of Ramadan, the Cairo bourgeoisie follows its old habits and collects in the luxury hotel. Since it is the cold and overcast season in Cairo, and Aswan is five hundred miles to the south, with a brilliant, cloudless warm sun, it has always been fashionable to be seen on the great-awninged terraces of the Cataract Hotel. Speaking only French, swarms of well-dressed, bad-mannered bourgeois children romp up and down, evading their dusky, faithful nursemaids. Their parents, dressed in European clothes that are relics of the past, contemplate the cusped dome of the Aga Khan's tomb across the river, knowing they are almost able to see the Begum's residence just below it, feeling that time has reversed itself. The old bourgeoisie, using up its compulsory bank deposits in a last flicker of sunset before the inflation erodes them completely, and the young Nasserites, face each other without hatred on neutral ground. The Nasserite officers, sons of peasants and small shopkeepers, are uneasy in the Cataract Hotel; they do not really belong there.

Where is Brezhnev? The banquet hall, in the New Cataract Hotel, with the great places on the dais surmounted by the Russian insignia, can easily be seen by asking the waiters, old acquaintances brought

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down from the Cairo hotels for the occasion. There are banquet places for less than seventy people.

Where are the Russians? There are no Russian faces in the Cataract Hotel. They live in high-rise apartment buildings, electrically-serviced and air-conditioned, with gardens and tennis-courts and swimming pools. They have their own food-shops where they buy sanitary frozen food brought from Russia; they have Russian films. They are such high-ranking specialists, so qualified in all the complex skills required in building the world's largest dam, that, big and little, they are handled like precious objects; they have a car pool driven by the most dependable native drivers. Toward evening they can occasionally be seen treading suspiciously through the bazaars of the native town, looking with dread at all the foodstuffs threatening them with communicable diseases, horrible examples of which thrust their hands out for alms or even touch their garments to beg. Mothers scream in anger as clean, white-skinned blond children touch some filthy object, or dirty piece of sweetmeat sugar. They go back to their enclave to scrub the children in boiled and filtered piping hot water.

The natives of Aswan benefit from the employment and the flood of money pouring in. They know that only such specialists can build the dam, and they must have the dam. Seventy years ago, at the turn of the century, another set of specialists built another dam at Aswan, the first, the miracle of its time. While they do not remember the building of Sir Ernest Cassel's dam, they remember the British, who were here as late as World War II. There are always foreigners in Egypt, building, advising, touring, living well. But the British, also obsessed with sanitation and living in enclaves, seemed to have a lively interest in the land and its people, a passion for archaeology and native languages and history, a sympathy for Islam. . . .

Alas! Brezhnev does not come. And of course, not Nasser now. First to get the word are the waiters from the Cairo hotels, who simply pack up and take the train north, having enjoyed their state-paid holiday. But the disgruntled Army officers give up only gradually, having spent two or three months' salary for a chance to be seen. The three day Ramadan holiday is ending and the savings of the French-speaking Cairo bourgeoisie are also giving out. Soon the Cataract and the New Cataract are back to normal, nearly empty, avoided by the Russians in their antiseptic compounds, unvisited by foreign tourists; and financially beyond the reach of the Cairo bourgeoisie or Nasserite officialdom.

Tacking through the Cataract islands of red granite in a huge-sailed felucca, one comes upon the only surviving Nubian villages, those downstream of the first Aswan dam. A different race, a different language; a different world. Civilized, subtle, ascetic and scrupulously clean; dark-skinned, tall and thin, they are not commercial, they have no trading interests; they cannot lay money aside. Boatmen, fishermen,

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formerly shepherds along the cliffs that line the Nubian Nile valley, cultivators of the rare patches of flat river bank, they give freely of their houses and food. Dry and unsensual, vivacious and full of natural delight, these wise children live in another world from the Egyptians; as separate and intact as in the days of the Pharaohs. But the modern Ramses in far-off Heliopolis, builder of great water-works, decreed that their land should be submerged beneath the waters; and the fifty thousand who inhabited the Nubian course of the Nile, between the first and second cataracts, have been transplanted to model tenement blocks at Kom-Ombo well above Aswan, and considerably east of the Nile, to await the arrival of water from the new dam for vast new sugar-fields projected by the Cairo government. Here Khedivial satraps reduced Ptolemaic temples to lime to build the first boom-time sugar-mills in the nineteenth century; and here the Ptolemies, modern, foreign innovators themselves, had such success in introducing agricultural colonies that they built the enormous temple to the crocodile god of the mud who flooded them with rich benefits from their newly-dug canals.

Part of the Kom-Ombo temple still stands, escaped from the Khedivial lime-burners; some of the river-bank population still venerate the mummified crocodiles to be found in the crypts. And just to the north, above the sugar zone, Edfu stands untouched, the largest of the Ptolemaic monuments; in Egypt second in size only to Karnak; as square and high and new as when the sculptors of its vast reliefs put down their tools. This area was the Ptolemies' special exhibit of technological progress in modern flood control and irrigation, as the Fayyum had been of earlier dynasties; as the Ernest Cassel Aswan dam and the Assiut and Nag Hammadi barrages were to be of the British. But the Nubians, the third agricultural colony to be planted here by the North, after the Ptolemaic and Khedivial enterprises, are not irrigators or rational cultivators; they are not canal people. They decorate the outer walls of their clean new Kom-Ombo tenements as much like their Nubian mud-huts as possible; each separate apartment strives to recapture the atmosphere of that submerged valley which retained its identity even after the god Ramses introduced on its paltry banks the scale of the colossal: with Abu Simbel he transplanted Karnak to the colonies. As yet in Kom-Ombo the water has not come, and the Nubians hope it will not, so they will not have to irrigate. As yet, they are still next to the desert, one foot in sand, where at night all is the same as in millennia past. Perhaps that single Israeli bomb will save them, uncover their submerged homes, and destroy the valley below with an enormous impounded wave? The end of civilization, the trigger of the final war? Not for the Nubians, who then can return to their homes, taking with them the same mats and cooking pots they have always used.

Streaking down Lake Nasser from the first to the second cataracts

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at high speed in the hydrofoil boat, one senses the death in this vast body of water, from canyon bank to canyon bank. Though the water is sweet, and will bring life to the thirty millions crowded into the slender valley north of it, it seems as if it were salt, a lake of natron, for there is not a blade of grass on the jagged canyon-edge cliffs ot powder-grey to either side; not even a goat, or a tent. No one, no animal, nor grass has ever lived here. The Nubian villages on the former banks of the narrow river lie hundreds of feet below the water on which the hydrofoil skims; the edges we see to either side were many miles out in the high and rocky desert, where not a wild ass nor even any insect could survive. And the water rises too fast for any grasses to form. The Nubians survived the absolutism of the Pharaohs, of the iconoclastic Copts and Muslims, of the Khedives and the British. Now they are under a water-works; thirty-million people to the north can multiply faster. Egyptian schools in fine new buildings, complete with portraits of political leaders, have been built without stint in Nubian Kom-Ombo, and Nubian children who were once not within a hundred miles of a school can acquire literacy in the unfamiliar national language of Egypt, and thence prepare themselves for participation in the competitive skills of modern urbanized life.

The lifted colossi of Ramses rise high in the desert sun on the rising edge of the lake, twenty miles from the opposite bank of this vast body of water, where once in Karnakian gloom and grandeur they dominated the narrow bank just at water's edge of the slender river, looming enormous and out-of-place in that poor, landless outpost country, with uncomprehending native villages strung sparsely along the stream. Now the tastelessness and gigantism of imperial and colonial rule seem correctly placed, in their present transplantation, in the midst of nothingness and vastness: no grasses, no villages, no animals; the opposite edge of the lake sometimes invisible in the heat and glare. Karnak lifted on a cloud above the lifeless desert. The foreign engineers have seen to it that the edges of the sectioning cannot be seen; the smaller queen's temple has an equal vulgarity of style.

A ramshackle river steamer full of jolly Nubians threshes southward on its way to Wadi Halfa, the railhead at the Second Cataract. No, one cannot go; one must return to Cairo and take the plane, for Khartoum. Nubians, of an age to be called for military service in the Israel war, slip away from the Kom-Ombo and Aswan areas and rematerialize in the Sudan, inside another political jurisdiction. How can one tell if they are from Egyptian, or Sudanese territory?

"We love Nasser. And Nasser wants the war. So we go to the war." The Egyptians cannot understand him. He is not of human clay. He belongs at Abu Simbel or at Karnak, a great force of will rising, colossal, out of the desert, sculptured in hard, sand-resisting granite. Ramses too loved his military adventures and exploits in Palestine, the

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wretched Retenu, from which his subjects could see no benefit, only expense; and carved his Palestinian military triumphs, with his own colossal figure hurling axes from chariots and leading captives by the hair, in high relief all over Egypt's vastest monuments.

But for the Egyptians, Farouk is themselves; and today, only a few years after his death, the plump voluptuary has become as legendary as Ludwig II of Bavaria; his castles and palaces are exhibited with pride, and revenue from admissions is surprisingly high for these tourist-less times. The slightest and most ordinary of his personal effects are exhibited reverently in glass cases, peered at and breathed over by the masses. His infantile tastes are leered at in the ludicrous display, in the pistachio-towered Alexandria sea-castle (a seeming copy, in cheap materials, and on a smaller scale, of Newport's "Breakers"), of his childish collection of racy French novels, in yellow covers; spicy drawings of ladies in brassieres and panties, and such choice items as a cluster of silken withes, collected in an enameled handle, the work of some jeweler, for goodness knows what purpose? How naughty he was, how sluggish, how old-fashioned, how very Egyptian! Enviously, they file around the display cases. This sloppy, uneducated, harmless, will-less amoeba, worn out by cantharides, retarded in mind, was and remains their ideal, their idea of the good life. Nasser they cannot understand; ascetic, monogamous, dedicated and driven toward goals, he is not one of his own people; he comes from beyond, like a scourge, an epidemic, or a prophet.

But Farouk is the soul, the essence of Egypt. He spent in one year never more than ten million; in most years somewhat less. Auction sales have recovered large sums from his collection of historic miniature objects made from gold and precious stones, and from his collection of pornography. The garish gilded plush Louis furniture, the lust of every Egyptian's heart, remains in the palaces; yokels gape longingly at it; Nasser has plain deal tables and chairs. Fuad and Farouk had a weakness for bathrooms and faucets and elaborate bathing arrangements involving gold-mosaic and marble, descending steps, hand-rails and intricate hydraulic hook-ups. Water-closets that were marvels of both reticence and majesty, of understatement and extreme authority. Farouk loved large-scale, white-paste models of the flashier Pharaonic ruins—Luxor and the temple of Amon-Ra at Karnak were favorites—and brilliantly-hued murals of goings-on in the later Ramses and Amenhotep courts, featuring plump coryphées in see-through garments wearing wreaths and shaking tambourines—all most unarchaeological and un-related to the decorously desiccated figures in the Theban tomb-paintings. These are on view at his Gizeh palace, the most completely Faroukian of all the royal buildings; with its Pharaonic furniture and decorations it is a stage-set for an *Aida* production of the Gatti-Casazza period; one expects Mme. Schumann-Heink to appear at any moment at the top of the stairs in full cry

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while Rhadames looks up from below and the orchestra crashes away. Here the stage set is all real: real marble, real alabaster made up into translucent columns, and real gilt-bronze, real gold plating. And silver and velvet.

In time this extravaganza, with the other Fuad and Farouk palaces in Cairo and Alexandria, will produce handsome returns for the government, in terms of tourist revenue; as have Ludwig II's; there is a great difference between Farouk's ten million a year, most of it spent within the country and in part ultimately recoverable, and Nasser's hundreds and hundreds of millions a year, spent on articles of war and war itself. Farouk's was a corrupt, pseudo-Parliamentary, easy going, anything-goes government; his multi-racial, multi-religious state free of prejudice against Greeks and Jews, with relatively free universities, a cynical-minded press and educated class. Contrast it with Nasser's ruthless, efficient, total totalitarianism, with total suppression of the universities, the press, of criticism; the elimination of all classes except the Nasser-worshipping working class; the expulsion of racial and religious minorities, and everywhere the giant photographs and pictures of the dictator, on every radio the giant voice. The revenue which went to the rich and the landlords and the extravagances of the royal house now goes to the state, and the state spends it on arms. In most cases nothing has been done for public facilities, public services, public transportation, utilities and sewers, since the Faroukian era, and much of that equipment is wearing out. And the population, then 22 million, is 34 million. No wonder little Nubia was not permitted to escape, but gobbled up for the good of the whole. And one Israeli bomb on top of the Aswan dam—

—JOSEPH BENNETT

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir:

Mr. Charles Millard's article, "The New Boston: City Hall," in THE HUDSON REVIEW (Spring, 1970) is one of the best critiques of that building that I and my staff have seen. Mr. Millard's description of the building's rationale and its relation to the surrounding area is quite perceptive.

My only quibble is a minor one—that the architects are Kallmann, McKinnell *and Knowles,* not just Kallmann and McKinnell.

ELLIOT K. FRIEDMAN
Senior Administrative Assistant
Boston Redevelopment Authority
Boston, Mass.

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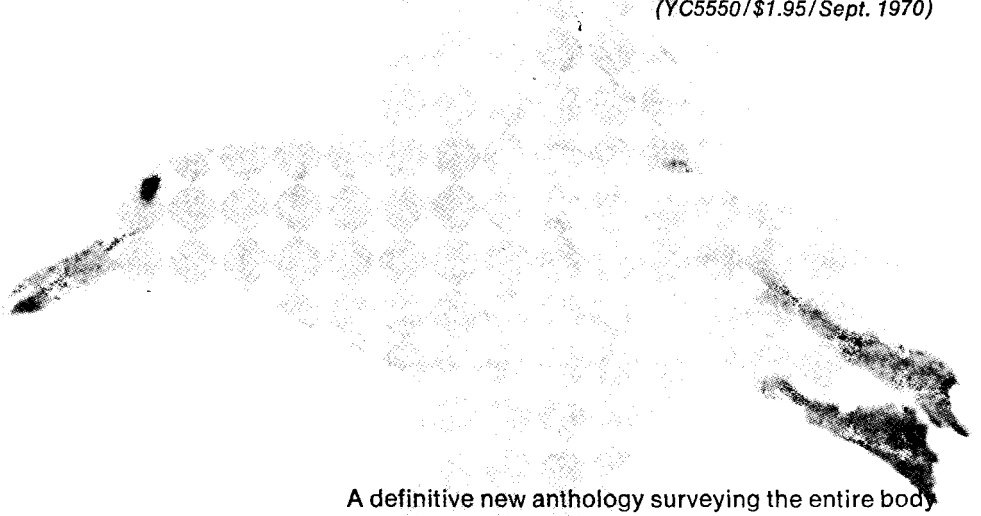

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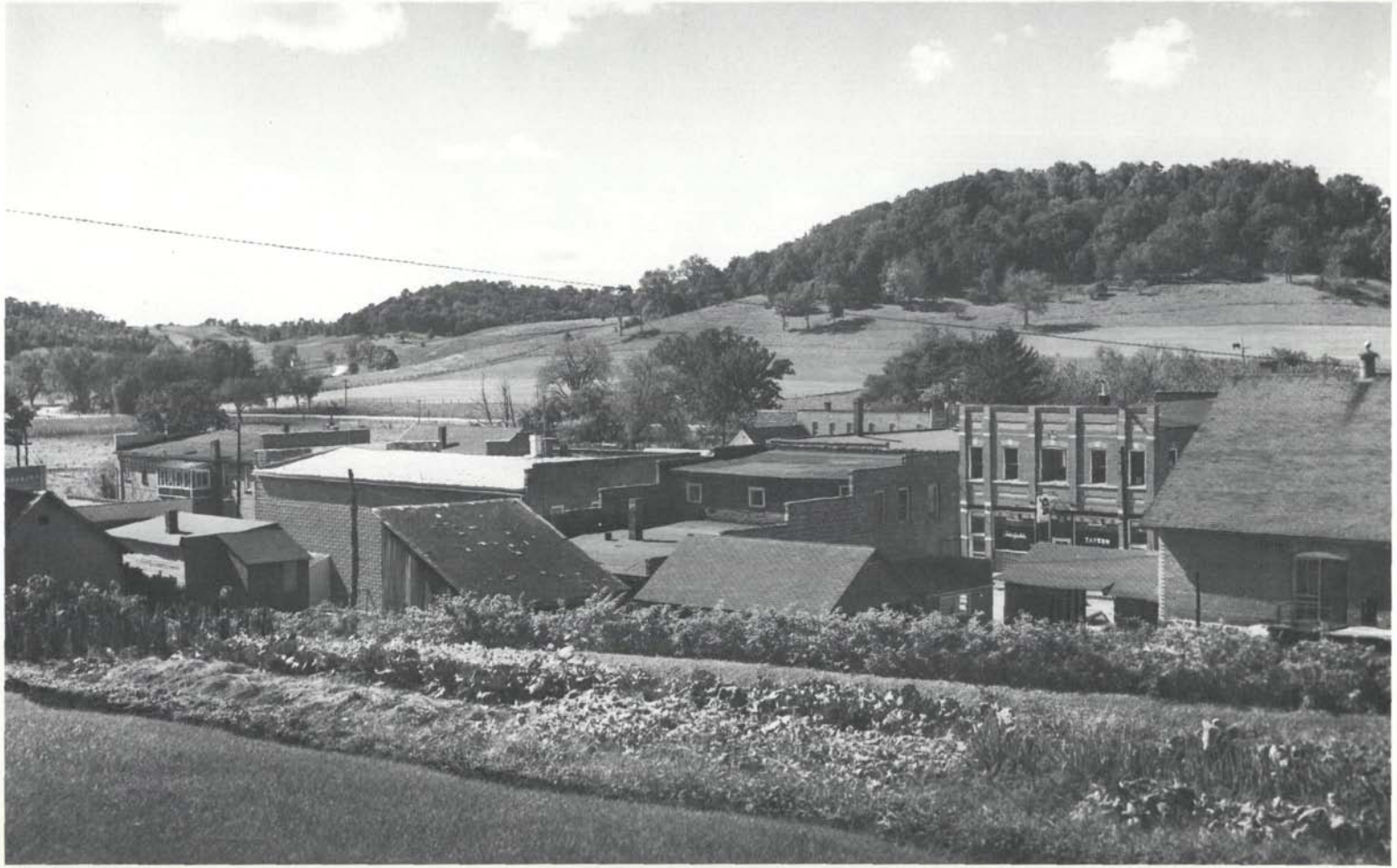

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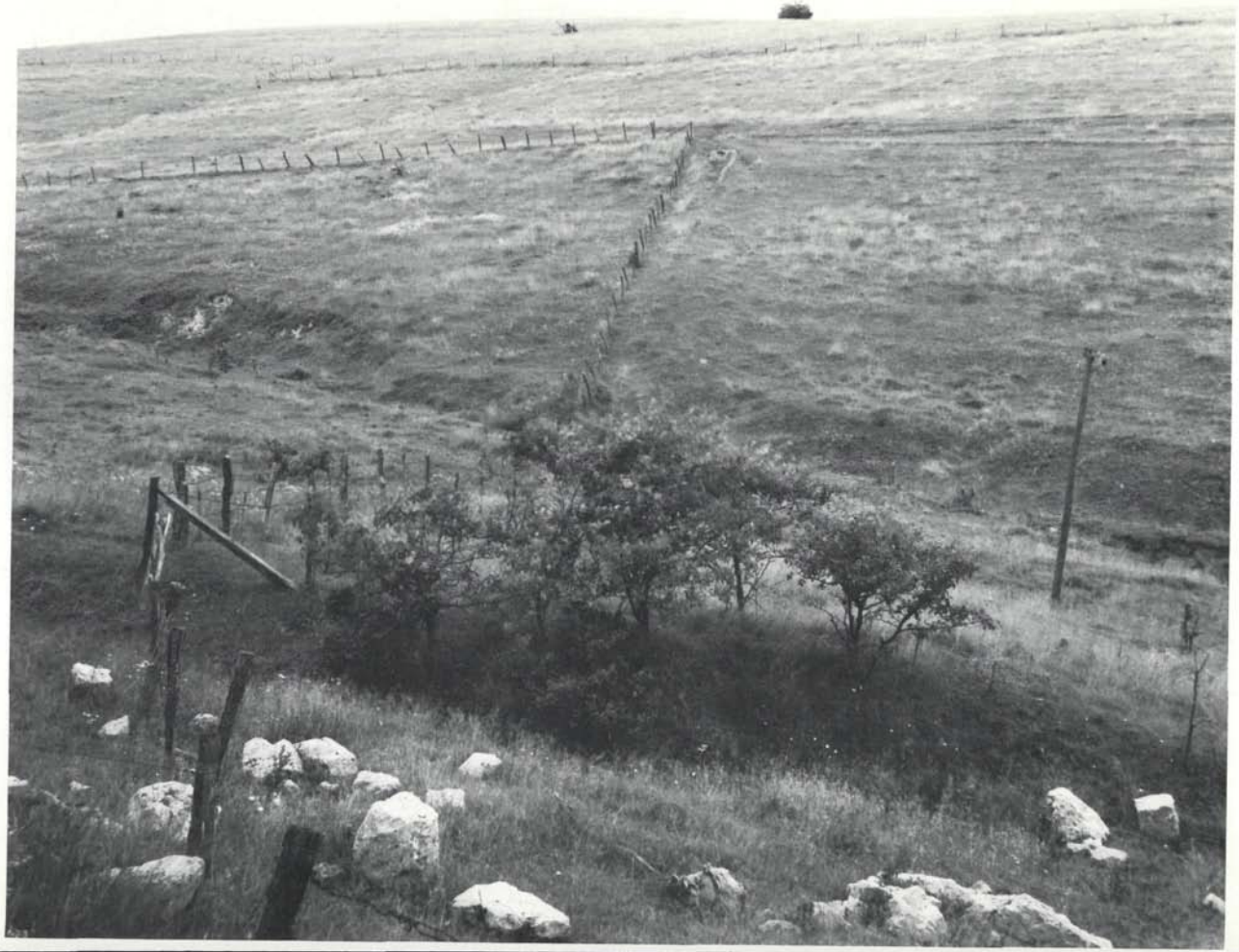

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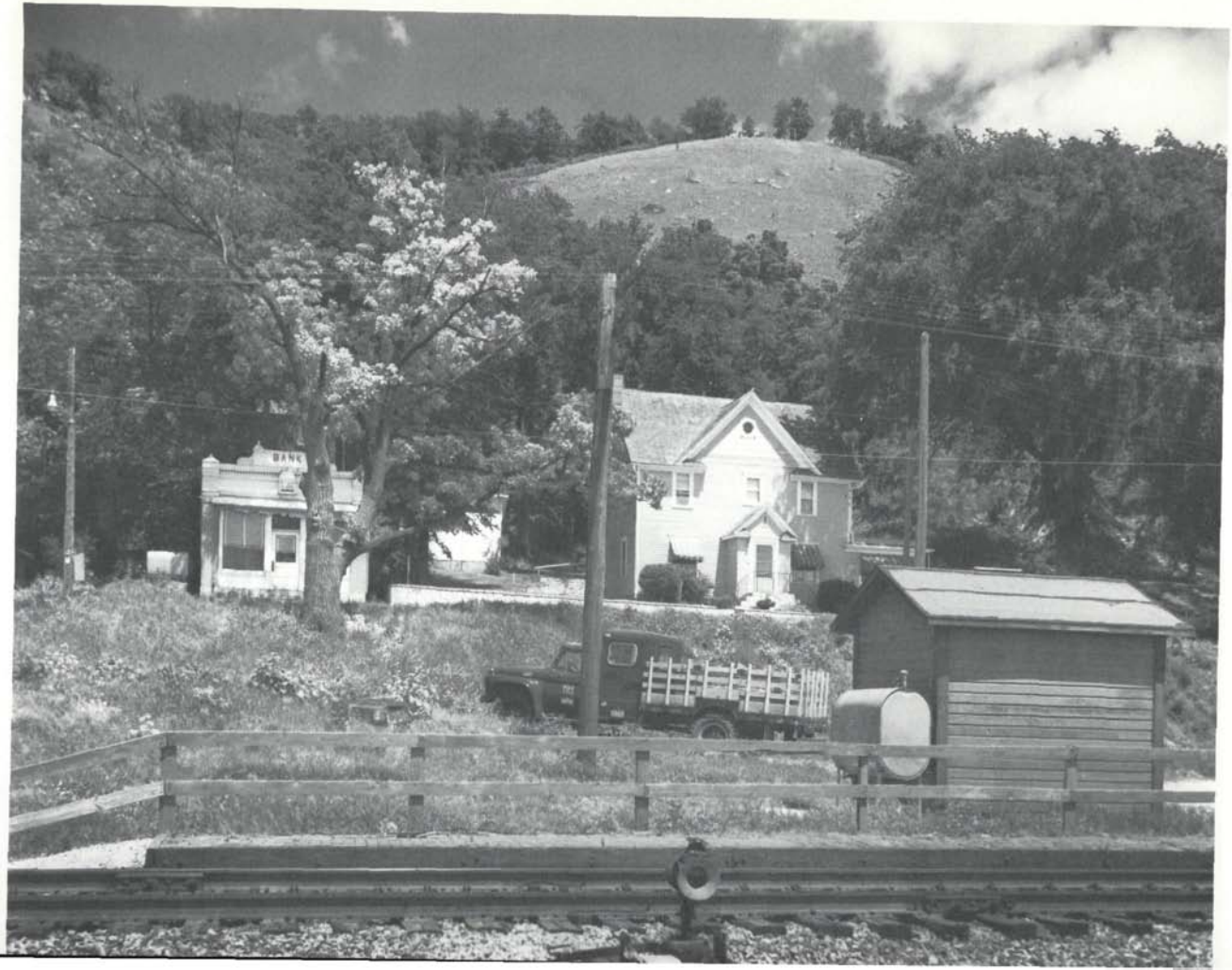

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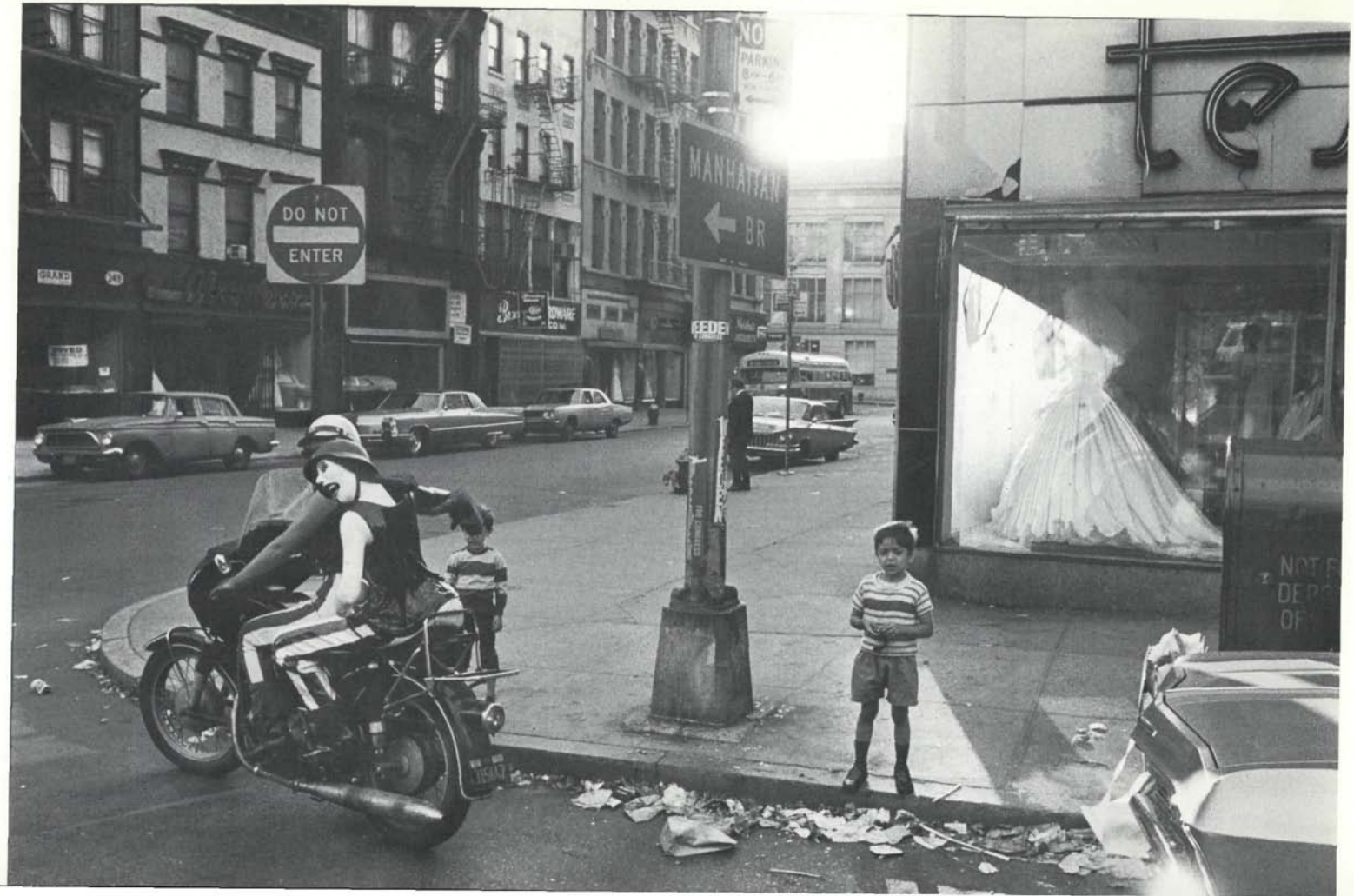

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